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# The Publishing of Buddhist Books for Beginners in Modern China from Yang Wenhui to Master Shengyen

Gregory Adam Scott

Digital Humanities Postdoctoral Fellow  
Institute for Advanced Studies in the Humanities, University of Edinburgh, Scotland, UK

## Abstract

Printed books have occupied a central place in East Asian Buddhist culture for centuries, venerated as vessels of the dharma and as sacred objects in their own right. Indeed the act of publishing sūtra texts was often portrayed as generating immeasurable amounts of merit. Yet the language and style of the scriptures is not one that is immediately accessible without specialized instruction, and thus commentaries, discourses, lectures and other didactic devices proliferated alongside the sūtra texts. One genre of didactic text that has played a crucial role in the personal religious histories of many Chinese Buddhists is the introductory text or book for beginners (*chuxue* 初學 or *rumen* 入門). Dozens of such texts were produced from the late nineteenth century onwards, and continue to occupy bookstore shelves today. Books of this type enable the curious to learn about Buddhist teachings in an easily-accessible format, without the need for an immediate investment of time or personal commitment.

This presentation will focus on three authors of such Buddhist introductory texts, each of whom lived in very different historical circumstances and thus produced markedly different types of books: Yang Wenhui 楊文會 (1837-1911), who resurrected Buddhist publishing in the decades following the Taiping Rebellion and who wrote *Textbook for Beginning Buddhism* 佛教初學課本;

Ding Fubao 丁福保 (1874-1952), the editor of the massive *Great Dictionary of Buddhism* 佛學大辭典 as well as a series of eight introductions to Buddhism; and Master Shengyen 聖嚴法師 (1930-2009), whose books are some of the most popular introductory texts to Buddhism in the English-reading world.

The major argument of this article is that introductory texts are much more complex and significant than their elementary nature might suggest. They represent distillations of a multitude of traditions into a stable and accessible framework, and serve as textual embodiments of the authors' pedagogical methods. Books for beginners constitute a unique category of Buddhist print culture, one which sought both to rewrite the past and to re-represent it for the next generation of believers and practitioners.

**Key words :** Buddhism, print culture, religious primers

## 1. Introduction

Printed copies of scriptures and other texts have occupied a central place in East Asian Buddhist culture for centuries. They have been venerated both as a medium to transmit the teachings of Buddhas and eminent masters, and as sacred objects with supernormal powers, with the act of reproducing scriptural texts widely portrayed as generating immeasurable amounts of merit.<sup>①</sup> Yet without specialized instruction, the erudite terminology of many scriptures is not immediately comprehensible even to the literate, and thus annotations, discourses, lectures and other didactic devices have proliferated alongside scriptural texts to serve as guides for the perplexed. One didactic genre that has played a crucial early role in the religious engagement of many Chinese Buddhists in the modern era is the book for beginners, a class of text marked by such terms as *chuxue* 初學 (beginning study), *rumen* 入門 (introductory), and *gangyao* 綱要 (general outline).<sup>②</sup> Dozens of such texts were published from the late nineteenth century onward and continue to be featured prominently on bookstore shelves and in digital collections today. Books of this type enabled readers who were curious about Buddhist teachings to learn more about them in an easily-accessible format, and did not immediately require the commitment of time and effort required to learn to read scriptural texts. Such books for beginners represent a crucial aspect of modern Chinese Buddhist print culture, one that

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① See, for example, Gregory Schopen, “The Phrase *sa prthivīpradeśaś caityabhūto bhavet* in the *Vajracchedikā*: Notes on the Cult of the Book in Mahāyāna” and “On Sending the Monks Back to Their Books: Cult and Conservatism in Early Mahāyāna Buddhism” in his *Figments and Fragments of Mahāyāna Buddhism in India: More Collected Papers*, Honolulu: University of Hawai’i Press, 2005, 25-62, 108-153.

② Of the three, the last appears to have been used most widely in titles, with seven items using this term appearing in the Digital Catalogue of Chinese Buddhism: <http://bib.buddhiststudies.net/>.

was a central concern for several influential authors, editors, and publishers.

This paper examines three creators of Chinese-language Buddhist introductory texts, each of whom sought to connect their deep knowledge of the Buddhist textual corpus with the interests and needs of the novice student: Yang Wenhui 楊文會 (1837-1911), who helped resurrect Buddhist scriptural publishing in the decades following the Taiping Rebellion; Ding Fubao 丁福保 (1874-1952), a physician and bibliophile who drew upon his extensive personal collection of rare books for his annotations; and Master Shengyen 聖嚴法師 (1930-2009), whose English-language books are presently among the most popular introductory texts to Buddhism. These figures are connected in that they all studied a similar body of scriptural texts and shared a number of social connections among Chinese and Japanese lay and monastic Buddhists; but each lived in a very different era in terms of what types of texts were available, what technologies were used to print them, and the larger educational and linguistic background of the audiences for their books. In examining their books for beginners, I will be drawing upon the field of print culture studies to provide a context for understanding the significance of what they wrote and how it was employed by students and readers. Print culture refers to the sphere of human activity that surrounds the production and consumption of printed materials, and consists of two related aspects. The first is *products of print*, meaning the physical books, pamphlets, and other materials that are produced by the printing press. The second is the *social structures of print*, including editors, book collectors, publishing houses, book stores, and reading practices.<sup>③</sup> Through the lens of print culture we are

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③ I am indebted for this twofold definition to Professor Greg Downey of the School of Journalism & Mass Communication and the School of Library & Information Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Madison. See his blog “Uncovering Information Labor”, available at: <http://uncoveringinformationlabor.blogspot>.

able to look more closely at the larger context within which these texts were produced, and see where the content of these books was not simply the product of their credited author, but where it was also informed by such factors as educational changes, networks of related publications, social connections with other scholars and authors, and similar phenomena that transcend the printed page. In the case of Buddhist books for beginners, I would argue that from Yang Wenhui through to master Shengyen, these introductory texts embody and reflect a much more complex set of intellectual and historical concerns than their elementary nature might suggest.

## 2. Yang Wenhui and the Re-Transmission of a Buddhist Primer

Throughout the early Republican period (1912-1949) Buddhist writers in China would trace the beginnings of the modern revival of Buddhism back to the literati publisher Yang Wenhui. The story of his conversion to Buddhist studies was widely disseminated, and describes how having fled to Hangzhou 杭州 in the early 1860s to avoid the turmoil of the Taiping Rebellion, Yang chanced upon a copy of *Dasheng qixin lun* 大乘起信論 (Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith) in a bookstore.<sup>④</sup> After reading the book, Yang was inspired toward Buddhist study, and in 1866 began to publish woodblock editions of Buddhist scriptures under the imprint of the Jinling Scriptural Press 金陵刻經處. In 1897 he and his collaborators formally established the press on the grounds of his estate in

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com/ 2008/09/print-culture-and-sciencetechnology.html.

- ④ While this is the most widely-reprinted account of Yang's turn toward Buddhism, Goldfuss points out that autobiographical materials and letters describe a less romantic and sudden process of conversion, initiated by either the death of Yang's father or an illness. Gabriele Goldfuss, *Vers un bouddhisme du XXe siècle: Yang Wenhui (1837-1911), Réformateur Laïque et Imprimeur*, Paris: Collège de France, Institut des Hautes Études Chinoises, 2001, 35-37.

Nanjing, and by the time of his death in 1911 the press had printed some 253 titles, had inspired or influenced a number of other scriptural presses, and would continue to publish Buddhist texts until the 1960s. Yang's influence extended even further; his titles were also reprinted by other presses, many publishers who would rise to prominence in the 1920s and 1930s had studied under him, and his own writings remained popular long after his death.<sup>⑤</sup> Late in his life Yang turned to educational work, founding a Buddhist school for monastics and laypeople called the Jetavana Hermitage 祇洹精舍 on the grounds of the press in Nanjing. Although the school only operated for sixth months, from the winter of 1908 to the summer of 1909, its students included such figures as Taixu 太虛 (1890-1947) and Ouyang Jian 歐陽漸 (1871-1943), both of whom would later found Buddhist seminaries (*Foxue yuan* 佛學院) of their own.

The Jetavana Hermitage was named after a park near Śrāvastī, in modern-day Uttar Pradesh in India, which in the time of Śākyamuni Buddha functioned as the first permanent meeting place for Buddhist monastics, and which is said to be the location where a number of Mahāyāna sermons were preached.<sup>⑥</sup> Yang established his school to improve the education of Buddhist monastics, although laypeople were also permitted to study there, and it operated along the lines of a modern school rather than a traditional Confucian academy, with different departments taught by specialist teachers, set classes and textbooks.<sup>⑦</sup> The civil service

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⑤ Holmes Welch, *The Buddhist Revival in China*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1968, 2-10. Welch mainly relies on the account by Yang's granddaughter, Buwei Yang Chao, and the biography in Yang Wenhui, *Yang Renshan jushi yizhu* 楊仁山居士遺著, 11 Vols., Beijing: Wofu si Fojing liutongchu 1923.

⑥ DDB, 「祇園精舍」. Several different Chinese transliterations of the name exist. For Yang's school, both 祇洹精舍 and 祇園精舍 were used.

⑦ Goldfuss, 186-201.

examination system had just been abolished in 1905, and new types of educational institutions and study materials were being developed across China. As part of his educational efforts, Yang printed two notable introductory texts designed for beginners in Buddhist studies and which were intended for use in his school: *Fojiao chuxue keben* 佛教初學課本 (Textbook of Buddhism for Beginning Students) and *Shizong lüeshuo* 十宗略說 (Brief Discussion of the Ten Schools). The primer continued to circulate long after Yang's school ceased to operate, with at least seven editions known to have been printed, while the latter book appears to have been more limited in exposure. In composing these books for beginners, Yang drew upon longstanding models of education in China, but was also well aware of what modern forms of education and Buddhists abroad were up to; it is no accident that Yang chose the term "textbook" to describe his primer, and modeled his outline of Buddhist schools on a Japanese work. In looking closely at the composition, use, reception, and distribution of these books, we get a glimpse of deeper historical currents at work in the development of modern Chinese Buddhism. Yang in particular appears to have been quite hesitant to introduce drastic changes to his Buddhist publications, but was ready to incorporate new methods and models in his creation of introductory sources, recognizing that beginners, especially the young students of fin-de-siècle Qing, needed unique types of sources in order to be able to learn effectively.

The first book that Yang produced for his new school was his primer *Fojiao chuxue keben* 佛教初學課本. The preface for the primer is dated the second month of Guangxu 光緒 32 (February or March 1906) and it was likely block carved later that year.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> I have not yet seen an original or reprint edition with an explicit block carving date, which usually appears appended to the end of a text. Luo Cheng 羅琿, *Jinling kejingchu yanjiu* 金陵刻經處研究 (A Study of the Jinling Scriptural Press) (Shanghai: Shanghai shehui kexueyuan chubanshe, 2010) dates the book to 1906, presumably based also on the date given in Yang's preface. Luo Cheng, 180.



The text as printed had gone through several generations of editing, revising, and reprinting, and it is important to note that Yang was neither the author nor the annotator of the work, even though he is often credited with such roles in bibliographic and secondary sources. He was, however, responsible for much of the editing. The roots of the primer extend back to the Confucian text *Sanzi jing* 三字經 (The Three Character Classic), commonly credited to Wang Yinglin 王應麟 (1223-1296) although other editions were later published and popularized. The classic was one of the most widely-used texts in primary education in China until the beginning of the twentieth century, used to teach children both written character recognition and basic ethical knowledge.<sup>9</sup> Its format, as indicated by the title, is a main text (*zhengwen* 正文) made up of triplets written in classical language, often accompanied by a more verbose half-character-width exegesis and commentary (*zhujie* 註解 or *zhushu* 註疏). The method of instruction was for the student to memorize the text and have its meaning explained by a teacher with help from exegetical notes. In so doing the child would learn both to recognize the meaning and sound of the written characters, as well as the ethical teachings of the text itself.

In the Tianqi 天啟 era of the Ming 明 dynasty (1621-1627), the Chan monk Guangzhen 廣真 (Chuiwan laoren 吹萬老人; 1582-1639) composed a Buddhist text based on the *Sanzi jing* model: *Shijiao sanzi jing* 釋教三字經 (The Buddhist Three Character Classic).<sup>10</sup> Guangzhen imitates the format of the earlier Confucian work, organizing his text into three-character phrases, and

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<sup>9</sup> See Herbert A. Giles, trans., *Elementary Chinese: San Tzu Ching*, Shanghai: Messrs. Kelly & Walsh Ltd., 1900.

<sup>10</sup> See the DDBS Person Authority entry on Guangzhen, <http://authority.ddbc.edu.tw/person/?fromInner=A001662>. My source for *Shijiao sanzi jing* is the edition reprinted by the Yangzhou Scripture Hall in 1905. Other extant editions include one printed at Chaoming Temple in 1872 held at Harvard, and another printed at the Huikong Scriptorium 慧空經房, possibly the same edition.

similarly to the *Sanzi jing* he intended his work for the education of the young; in this case, novices who are still being trained in monasticism. As he writes in his preface:

Among the Confucians they have the *Three Character Classic* for the education of children, which they wish the young to recite and memorize, and upon maturing attain insight. ... In our own teaching, Śākyamuni descended and was born in the human realm so that he could scale the palace wall and attain the Way, establish the teachings and promulgate the denominations. This is something that can be distinctly verified, and one can cite and describe it. How could one not be willing to use it for the education of novices?<sup>11</sup>

Two themes mentioned in this preface would continue to show up in later versions of this Buddhist primer: the importance of citing textual evidence for the verification of teachings, and the primer's role in a process of instruction and memorization that would lead to maturation (*zhuang* 壯) and insight (*kaiwu* 開悟). The narrative of Guangzhen's book mirrors that of the Confucian *Sanzi jing* but is based firmly in the Buddhist textual corpus; both begin with descriptions of the basic nature of humans and the universe, but whereas the earlier *Sanzi jing* states that "People at birth are naturally good, the natures are much the same [though] their habits become widely different",<sup>12</sup> Guangzhen opens his primer with

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<sup>11</sup> The full preface is as follows, translated sections in bold: 「儒有**三字經**，為童子學。蓋欲童齡誦習，逮其壯而開悟。則帝王紀綱、人倫之序，不可得而忘也。我教自釋迦如來，降生人間，以致踰城證道，立教敷宗，歷歷可據者，亦可例而述之。甯不為沙彌便學耶。元夕前四日，援筆搜成一帖，題曰三字經，願將來吾輩口頭哩哩囉囉耳，倘亦壯而開悟，其為『人之初，性本善』，有不同也乎。蜀東吹萬老人謹序。」

<sup>12</sup> 「人之初，性本善，性相近，習相遠。」

“Before the eon of nothingness, in the primordial chaos, there was the original mind, the primeval universe.”<sup>13</sup> What follows includes mention of Śakyamuni Buddha, his awakening and teaching of the first Buddhist disciples, the arrival of Buddhism in China during the reign of Emperor Ming 明帝 of the Han, the Chan patriarchs including Bodhidharma 達摩 and Huineng 慧能, and masters such as Mazu Daoyi 馬祖道一, and finally an outline of basic daily practices for novices. Indeed at several points the text addresses itself to “you novices” (*er shami* 爾沙彌). The entire text is about twice the length of the Wang Yinglin edition of the *Sanzi jing*.

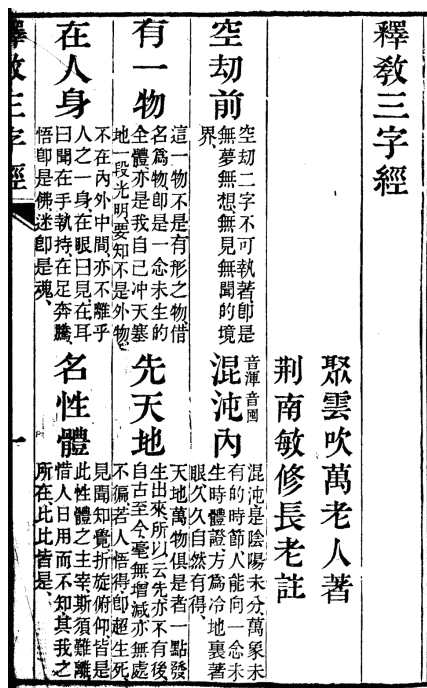


Figure 1: Sample page from a 1905 edition of *Shijiao sanzhi jing*

<sup>13</sup> 「空劫前，混沌內，有一物，先天地。」

At some point in the late Qing, a new edition of Guangzhen's *Shijiao sanzhi jing* was produced, now featuring interlinear exegetical commentary on the main text contributed by Minxiu Fuyi 敏修福毅 (fl. 1730s), a Chan monk of the Caodong 曹洞 school.<sup>14</sup> The annotations are written in a colloquial style and expand upon the meaning of the terse classical phrases. In some cases, the pronunciation of some characters is indicated by reference to a homophone. The presence of the commentary makes it much easier to understand the meaning of the text without the help of a knowledgeable teacher. An edition of the text with commentary was published in 1905 from blocks held in the Yangzhou Scripture Hall 揚州藏經院, funded by donations procured in large part by thirteen monastics and one layperson credited in the publishing information. This edition consists of 64 triplets, and a total of 13,964 characters including commentary. It was around this time that this version of the text attracted the notice of the Pure Land monk Yinguang 印光 (1861-1940), who set about revising and editing the text. At the time Yinguang was based in Putuoshan 普陀山 and had worked in the Andan Scripture Hall 安單經藏樓 of Fayu Temple 法雨寺, but he was neither well-known nor a published author until later in the 1910s when his writings started to appear in Buddhist periodicals.<sup>15</sup> It does not appear that Yinguang's version of *Shijiao sanzhi jing* was ever published, although his preface was reprinted in his collected works, and it echoes many of the sentiments written by Guangzhen nearly three centuries earlier:

...Its purpose is so that while a novice one may recite and memorize it, one may learn the essential points of the Buddhist texts, and make clear the doctrines of the ancestral Way. When

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<sup>14</sup> See DDBC Person Authority, <http://authority.ddbc.edu.tw/person/?fromInner=A020899>.

<sup>15</sup> On Yinguang, see ZFJS, 2:761-765.

one reaches maturity they may read the entirety of the tripitaka, practice all the five schools, achieve wondrous enlightened of one's own mind, and accord with the Buddha's mind.<sup>16</sup>

Again we find the text being promoted as a tool for monastic education, but here Yinguang emphasizes that the primer is merely the first step in a long process of mastering the tools required to read and understand the Buddhist canon. Perhaps because of the strong Chan flavour of the earlier text, as both Guangzhen and Minxiu were ordained in that school, the Pure Land monk Yinguang is said to have changed about thirty per cent of the main text and seventy per cent of the commentary.

It is this version of *Shijiao sanzi jing* which formed the basis of Yang Wenhui's primer. A devotee of the Pure Land tradition himself, in his own preface Yang writes that Yinguang's version far excelled those previous, and only required a few corrections and a new title to distinguish it from its past incarnations.<sup>17</sup> The main text consists of 732 triplets, with four triplets per column of text, for a total of 2,196 characters. Section titles appear as marginal notes, and divide the text thematically into sections on Buddhist history, schools, and doctrines. Compared to the earlier *Shijiao sanzi jing* work by Guangzhen, Yang's primer is much longer and

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<sup>16</sup> 「……俾為沙彌時，誦而習之。知佛經之要義，明祖道之綱宗。及其壯而遍閱三藏，歷參五宗，妙悟自心，冥符佛意。」(Yinguang, *Yinguang dashi wenchao* 印光大師文鈔, Vol. 3 正編, No. 26.)

<sup>17</sup> A 1931 edition of Yang's *Fojiao chuxue keben* and *Fojiao chuxue keben zhu* has been photographically reprinted in *Fozang jiyao* 佛藏輯要, Vol. 31, Chengdu: Bashu shushe, 1993, 413-442. Goldfuss notes that this edition is the same as the 1906 edition that can be found in some monastic libraries. Goldfuss, op. cit. 170fn3. A re-typeset reprinted edition appears in Yang Wenhui, *Yang Renshan quanji*, edited by Zhou Jizhi 周繼旨, Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2000, 101-145. Goldfuss was not able to find a copy of Yinguang's edition of *Shijiao sanzi jing*. Goldfuss, 173fn15.

more complex, going in to great detail in describing the different Buddhist schools, especially the Chan and Pure Land lineages, and the different worlds of Buddhist cosmology. The language, however, was intended to be comprehended by children and those with little education.<sup>18</sup> The primer was later widely distributed and used as an introductory text in Buddhist seminaries, and Yang attempted, unsuccessfully, to have it included in the *Zokuzōkyō* 續藏經, the Japanese extended edition of the East Asian canon.<sup>19</sup> The 1906 edition of Yang's primer contains two sections: *Fojiao chuxue keben*, which contains the main text only, and *Fojiao chuxue keben zhu* 佛教初學課本註, which presents each triplet from the main text in a full-size font followed by half-width exegetical commentary. The commentary provides lexicographical explanations for difficult terms in the main text, and uses scriptural references to expand upon advanced concepts. An example pair of triplets and accompanying commentary shows the wealth of knowledge that is meant to be contained by the pithy text:

“Transmitting the Mind-seal is the Chan Lineage.”:<sup>20</sup>The Mind-seal of the Buddha is none other than *prajñā-pāramitā*. The Fifth Patriarch instructed people to recite the *Diamond Sūtra*. The Sixth Patriarch became known as the Bodhisattva of *prajñā* study. All used *prajñā* as the mind-seal. Later people named it the Chan Lineage. This supra-supramundane Chan<sup>21</sup> cuts off the path of language and annihilates the locus of mental

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<sup>18</sup> Jan Kiely, “Spreading the Dharma with the Mechanized Press: New Buddhist Print Cultures in Modern Chinese Print Revolution, 1865-1949”, in *From Woodblocks to the Internet: Chinese Publishing and Print Culture in Transition, circa 1800 to 2008*, edited by Cynthia Brokaw and Christopher A. Reed, Leiden: Brill, 2010, 198.

<sup>19</sup> Goldfuss, 170fn4, 171fn5.

<sup>20</sup> 「傳心印，為禪宗。」

<sup>21</sup> DDB, 「出世間上上禪」; FGC, 1554.



Figure 2: Sample page from the 1931 edition of *Fojiao chuxue keben zhu*

functioning.<sup>22</sup> From the beginning they are partially bound together.<sup>23</sup>

In this case the primer begins its section on Chan by telling us something fundamental about what distinguishes it from others schools: it relies upon transmission of the mind-seal (*xinyin* 心印). The commentary teaches the student to read mind-seal as identical to *prajñā*, citing examples from the biographies of the fifth and sixth Chinese Chan patriarchs to support its claim, and using phrases and concepts taken verbatim from Buddhist scriptural literature.

<sup>22</sup> DDB, 「言語道斷心行處滅」. DDB cites the phrase as originally from the *Recorded Sayings of Dahui* 大慧語錄, T 1998A, 47, 920c23.

<sup>23</sup> 「佛之心印，即是般若波羅蜜，五祖令人誦金剛般若經，六祖稱為學般若菩薩，皆以般若為心印也。後人名為禪宗，是出世間上上禪，言語道斷心行處滅，始有少分相應。」 (*Fozang jiyao*, 31:424a.)



The text of *Fojiao chuxue keben* along with its annotation thus presents the teachings of the Buddhist scriptural texts in a distilled form, referencing important source materials by title and introducing the reader to key terms and phrases from the Buddhist corpus. It is important to note, however, that the text as first printed in 1906 was a joint product of Yinguang and Yang Wenhui, with Yinguang providing an apparently substantial proportion of the text and Yang crediting himself with corrections and some edits.<sup>24</sup> How then did Yinguang's unpublished manuscript edition of *Shijiao sanzi jing* come to the attention of Yang Wenhui, and what was the relationship between the two at the time? It does not appear that Yang and Yinguang ever met each other, but there are two mutual acquaintances who did visit both the Jinling Press in Nanjing and Putuoshan in the years immediately preceding the carving of Yang's primer in 1906.<sup>25</sup> The first was Gui Bohua 桂伯華 (1861-1915), an erstwhile participant in the 1898 reform movements who had a conversion experience thanks to reading a copy of the *Diamond Sūtra* 金剛經. He came to Nanjing to study under Yang in 1900, and went to visit Yinguang on Putuoshan not long after his arrival.<sup>26</sup> It might have been during this visit that Gui obtained a manuscript of Yinguang's edited *Shijiao sanzi jing* and brought it back to Yang in Nanjing. Yinguang would not be widely published

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<sup>24</sup> Apart from the mention of Yinguang in the preface, however, Yang's published text cites only Yang's input, and later bibliographic sources have maintained this. Both the main text and the annotated version of Yang's primer are credited as being narrated by Yang Wenhui (Renshan) of Shidai [county]: 「石埭楊文會仁山述」.

<sup>25</sup> In a letter to Gui Bohua, Yang writes that he had not spoken to Yinguang in person. Goldfuss, 150.

<sup>26</sup> Goldfuss, 143-144. Note that in this context Goldfuss gives the wrong first character for Yinguang's name. On Gui's biography, see Yu Lingbo 于凌波, *Xiandai Fojiao renwu cidian* 現代佛教人物辭典 (A Dictionary of Modern Buddhist Persons), Taipei: Foguang, 2004, 1:852-854.



for another decade, and at the time was relatively unknown outside of monastic circles. Another possibility is that it was thanks to Gao Henian 高鶴年 (1872-1962), a well-traveled Buddhist layman, that the text made its way to the Jinling Press. Gao had visited Yinguang in 1898 and again in 1901, and came to Yang's press in 1902 when Gui was still studying there. Gao was later responsible for having a series of Yinguang's essays published in the periodical *Foxue congbao* 佛學叢報 in Shanghai, but there is unfortunately no evidence that he was bringing manuscripts out of Putuoshan as early as this.<sup>27</sup>

*Fojiao chuxue keben* had a long publication life and continues to be reprinted today. It first appeared in *Yang Renshan xiansheng yizhu* 楊仁山先生遺著, a collection of Yang's posthumous collected works published by the Jinling Press in 1919.<sup>28</sup> The primer with annotations was reprinted in its own volume by Jinling in late 1930, and in 1933 the periodical *Foxue chuban jie* 佛學出版界 (Buddhist Publishing World), which showcased publications of the Shanghai Buddhist Books 上海佛學書局, featured a brief description of the book's contents and an excerpt from the section on the Vinaya lineage. It was later published by the Shanghai-based press in 1936 under the title *Fojiao chuxue keben zhujie* 註解 (annotated and explicated), by which time the book was being sold as the "fifth edition".<sup>29</sup> The primer continued to appear in Buddhist

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<sup>27</sup> Goldfuss, 144fn93. Yu Lingbo, *Yang Renshan jushi pingzhuan* 楊仁山居士評傳 (A Critical Biography of Layman Yang Renshan), Taipei: Xin wenfeng, 1995, 176-179. Kiely, 199-200.

<sup>28</sup> S1834. The collection was edited by Xu Weiru 徐蔚如 (1878-1937), who had founded scriptural presses in Beijing and Tianjin in 1918 and 1919.

<sup>29</sup> *Foxue chuban jie* 佛學出版界 (Buddhist Publishing World), Vol. 2, 1933; MFQ 64:185-187. The publication appears as S0152. Shanghai Buddhist Books must have published an earlier reprint edition, since it appears in advertisements in their periodical *Foxue banyue kan* 佛學半月刊 (Buddhism Semimonthly) in December 1934. See MFQ 50:202, 228.

periodical articles throughout the 1930s and in to the early 1940s. A January 15, 1935 article in *Fojiao jushilin tekan* 佛教居士林特刊 (Special Publication of the Buddhist Lay Association) outlines the origins of the primer as part of Yang Wenhui's educational work, a sixth edition is advertised in May 1939, the preface appears in a paraphrased version in November 1940, and the whole of the main text was reprinted in *Foxue banyue kan* 佛學半月刊 (Buddhism Semimonthly) on July 16, 1941.<sup>30</sup> These scattered but substantial references in Buddhist periodical literature point toward the abiding influence of the primer on Buddhist intellectual forum as it was recorded and transmitted in their print media. There was also a similarly-titled primer for intermediate students, *Zhongdeng Foxue jiaoke shu* 中等佛學教科書, written by Shanyin 善因 (fl. 1920-1947), a disciple of Taixu, published in 1930 and 1931.<sup>31</sup>

In contrast, another introductory text printed by Yang that focused on defining the Buddhist lineages had much less of an impact on the Buddhist world of late-Qing and Republican-era China than did the primer. *Shizong lüeshuo* 十宗略說 (A Brief Discussion of the Ten Lineages) was a revised and edited translation of *Hasshū kōyō* 八宗綱要 (Essentials of the Eight Schools) by the Japanese priest Gyōnen 凝然 (1240-1321). Gyōnen's work was reprinted in ten editions during the Meiji and Taishō eras and was used as a primer in the new Japanese schools for Buddhist priests. It was discussed at some length in Chinese Buddhist periodicals, and Master Shengyen studied it while a student at the Buddhist seminary at Jing'an Temple 靜安寺 in 1947.<sup>32</sup> It first appeared in China in print in the February 1913 issue of *Foxue congbao*, was later included in the 1919 posthumous

<sup>30</sup> MFQ 65:159-160, 54:450. MFQB 65:108, 65:377.

<sup>31</sup> S1332, S1333, S1334. On Shanyin, see ZFJS, 2:830-834.

<sup>32</sup> Daniel Stevenson, presentation at the Third International Conference on the Intellectual Legacy of Shengyen, May 26-30, 2010. A translated discussion of the book by Sakaino Koyo 境野黃洋, 八宗綱要講話, was serialized in *Sichuan*

collection of Yang's works, and was published in its own volume in 1921, now joined by extensive commentary by Wan Shuhao 萬叔豪 (fl. 1921-1936) and an additional preface by Ding Fubao, by whose Shanghai Medical Press 上海醫學書局 the book was published.<sup>63</sup> Significantly, in this schema Pure Land appears last among the Buddhist lineages, portrayed as both the culmination of the teachings of the previous school, and as the most universal gateway for practitioners. Yang's preface makes particular note of the special position of the Pure Land teachings:

The first nine schools divide sentient beings by type; the final school encompasses all sentient beings, and regardless of what Dharma they practice, they all practice Pure Land accumulation of merit. Thus the nine schools enter in to one school. After giving rise to the Pure Land, all means of practice can be fully realized. Thus one school enters in to the nine schools.<sup>64</sup>

Determining the historical priority and special features of the Buddhist lineages was not an easy task, and in Japan, where a Buddhist sectarian consciousness was much more pronounced, deciding how to write about their relationship was a process fraught with dissension and conflict. Yang clearly favoured the Pure Land lineage, but judging by his publication record he did not

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*Fojiao xunkan* 四川佛教旬刊 (Sichuan Buddhism Weekly) from September 1925 to March 1926. See MFQ 128:75-187.

<sup>63</sup> MFQ 2:21-27. The title does not appear in *Foxue shumu biao* 佛學書目表, the 1912 catalogue published by the Jinling Press. See Goldfuss, 171. The 1921 edition appears as S0313. Ding's preface was reprinted in *Haichaoyin* 海潮音 (Sound of the Sea Tide) in 1921. MFQ 151:449-450.

<sup>64</sup> 「以前之九宗分攝群機，以後之一宗普攝群機，隨修何法皆作淨土資糧，則九宗入一宗，生淨土後門門皆得圓證，則一宗入九宗。」 (*Fozang jiyao*, 31:442. Stevenson, op. cit.)

ignore texts from other traditions within Chinese Buddhism. A few outlines of Buddhist lineages were later published in Republican China, and they would feature prominently in academic histories of Buddhism published from the 1920s onward.<sup>35</sup>

Yang Wenhui's introductory texts were both composed in response to the need for materials with which to instruct monastics and laypeople in the fundamentals of the Buddhist religion, but in doing so he stayed close to longstanding traditions of Buddhist pedagogy and introduced only a few innovations of his own. When he compiled his primer in 1906, the home- and private academy-based education system that used texts such as the *Sanzi jing* for primary education was starting to fade with the recent abolishment of the civil service exam, and would continue to wane as governments of the Republican era established public and private schools along a Western model. We can, however, begin to see elements of Yang's publication work that reflect broader changes among Chinese Buddhists of the time. His use of Guangzhen's *Shijiao sanzi jing* as a textual model, for example, mirrors the popularity among his contemporary Buddhists of Ming-dynasty Buddhist writings, such as those of Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭 (1599-1655) and Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546-1623). We might also relate Yang's efforts to the larger context of the trend toward compiling 'bibles' of Buddhism in Asia, which drew upon models provided by missionary and orientalist scholars.<sup>36</sup> The most enduring influence of Yang on Buddhist books for beginners, however, would come from his students, disciples, and others inspired by his publishing efforts, who developed similar projects of their own and who were able to further develop the scope of the genre.

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<sup>35</sup> Jiang Weiqiao's 蔣維喬 *Zhongguo Fojiao shi* 中國佛教史 (History of Chinese Buddhism) being one example.

<sup>36</sup> Goldfuss, 174-176.

### 3. Annotated Scriptures and Collected Evidentiary Tales: Ding Fubao

Thanks in large part to Yang Wenhui's efforts, within a decade of his death in 1911 there were at least twelve Buddhist scriptural presses active in China, which together were producing hundreds of titles.<sup>37</sup> Yet authors, editors, and publishers were still faced with the difficulty of understanding the language and meaning of Buddhist scriptural texts. In a temple or classroom setting, the content of books for beginners such as Yang's primer could be explained in person, but for the lone reader the language of the primer, let alone the myriad titles being printed by scriptural presses, could be quite bewildering. The physician, bibliophile, and lay Buddhist Ding Fubao 丁福保 (Ding Zhongyou 丁仲祐, 1874-1952) observed as much in 1919:

Numerous, numerous! The sea of scriptures! Take one step into it, and it's a vast [expanse] without a shore. All who see the vast sea of work to be done simply sigh with despair. It is as if we are in a boat on the ocean and encounter a sudden storm of angry waves. One glimpse at the limitlessness, and all the passengers look at each other in fear. But the boatmen who know where it is peaceful, and who in calm control finally lead the boat to the other shore, how could they not have something called a compass (指南鍼)? Piloting a boat is like this, how could navigating the sea of scriptures be any different?<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> See Luo Cheng for a discussion of some of these presses. An outline of the major presses and some discussion of the smaller ones appears in Gregory Adam Scott, "Conversion by the Book: Buddhist Print Culture in Early Republican China," Ph. D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 2013.

<sup>38</sup> Ding Fubao 丁福保, *Dingshi Foxue congshu* 丁氏佛學叢書 (Ding's Buddhist Studies Collectanea), edited by Cai Yunchen 蔡運辰, Taipei: Beihai, 1970 [1918-1920], 377.

Ding published a series of books in the late 1910s and early 1920s that sought to address the turbid sea of scriptures by providing guidance to those who sought to explore its vast textual expanse. This series was titled *Dingshi Foxue congshu* 丁氏佛學叢書 (Ding's Buddhist Studies Collectanea) and was first published through his Shanghai Medical Press 上海醫學書局, an imprint founded to publish medical works translated from the Japanese. Ding's Buddhist Studies series consists of three major types of works: annotated scriptures; books for beginners that collect evidence for Buddhist teachings from the corpus of classical texts; and lexicographical works, of which Ding's *Foxue da cidian* 佛學大辭典 (Great Dictionary of Buddhist Studies) is the best known. Ding's series represents an important phase in the development of Buddhist publishing and of Buddhist studies in China: the production of a newly expanded set of tools that made it more possible than ever for individuals to study the meaning and messages of the scriptures. In addition, they were further empowered to guide themselves in their study rather than being reliant on a teacher or community.

Ding was from Wuxi 無錫 in Jiangsu province, and thanks to his family's scholarly background he had an interest in books from an early age. Initially he worked as a school teacher, but after finding it difficult to live on the teacher's salary, in 1902 he went to study Chinese medicine under Zhao Yuanyi 趙元益 (1840-1902) at the Dongwen Academy 東文學堂 in Shanghai.<sup>39</sup> In 1909 he

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<sup>39</sup> Jiang Qingbo 江慶柏, "Ding Fubao de cangshu guannian ji cangshu shijian 丁福保的藏書觀念及藏書實踐," *Tushuguan xue yanjiu* 圖書館學研究, February 2000, 96; Howard L. Boorman, ed., *Biographical Dictionary of Republican China*, New York: Columbia University Press, 1967, 3:269-270; Ding Fubao, *Chouyin jushi ziding nianpu* 疇隱居士自訂年譜, in *Qingdai minguo cangshujia nianpu* 清代民國藏書家年譜, edited by Zhang Aifang 張愛芳 and Jia Guirong 賈貴榮, Beijing: Beijing tushuguan chubanshe, 2004 [1929], 305; ZJFRZ, 423-424; Zhao Pushan 趙璞珊, "Ding Fubao he ta zaoqi

placed first in the medical exams held in Nanjing, and because of his experience translating Japanese medical works was posted to Japan by the Qing government, where he observed their medical system and purchased medical books.<sup>40</sup> When Ding returned to Shanghai he set up a private practice and began publishing his accumulated medical knowledge, initially through Wenming Books 文明書局, the publishing house he had founded in 1902 with two fellow translators and editors. His *Dingshi yixue congshu* 丁氏醫學叢書 (Ding's Medical Collectanea) was initially published by Wenming Books from 1908 to 1911, but from 1914 he began to use the imprint of the Shanghai Medical Studies Press.<sup>41</sup> His successful medical practice brought Ding an increased income which he spent on acquiring more rare and important texts for his collection, and his ability to identify and acquire significant rare books helped to supply the content for his press.

From 1913 he began to collect a great number of Buddhist scriptures and started to compile a lexicon of Buddhist terminology, and by the following year he was keeping a vegetarian diet,

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bianzhu fanyi de yishu 丁福保和他早期編著翻譯的醫書,” *Zhong-Xi yi jiehe zazhi* 中西醫結合雜誌, Vol. 10, No. 4, 1990, 248. Zhao Yuanyi had previously translated works on Western medicine and had attained the *juren* 舉人 degree in 1888.

<sup>40</sup> Ding, *Nianpu*, 32; Zhao Pusan, 248. See below for a discussion of his medical translations.

<sup>41</sup> Ding, *Nianpu*, 316-317, 325-326; Zhao Pusan, 248. Ding identifies Hua Chunfu 華純甫 and Li Jinghan 李靜涵 as his compatriots in the early days of Wenming Books. Earlier in 1906 Ding had founded a translation and publishing house called the Translation Society (Yishu gonghui 譯書公會) in his hometown of Wuxi through which he published a number of medical texts, but it folded after a property dispute in early 1908. For one catalogue of the Shanghai Medical Press' published works, see Shanghai tushuguan 上海圖書館, ed., *Zhongguo jindai xiandai congshu mulu* 中國近代現代叢書目錄, Shanghai: Shanghai tushuguan, 1979, 13-15.

something that he evidently maintained for the rest of his life.<sup>42</sup> Although there are several variant accounts of Ding's initial turn toward Buddhism, claiming that he met Yang Wenhui in 1903 in Nanjing or that he took the lay precepts in 1913, there is little corroborating evidence for any of them.<sup>43</sup> His engagement with Buddhism appears to have come about gradually rather than due to any dramatic event, and it was principally through collecting and reading Buddhist texts that he came to be interested in the religious tradition. Most significantly, it is clear that Ding never committed himself exclusively to Buddhism, and eventually shifted the focus of his textual studies and publishing to other religious traditions.<sup>44</sup> During the period of his Buddhist writing and publishing from about 1918 to 1924, however, he produced his landmark *Buddhist Studies Collectanea*. The thirty core titles of the series, as delineated by the contents of the 1970 reprint edition and by the preface and afterword that Ding wrote for the series, were initially published between 1918 and 1920, although Ding continued to add new titles and editions to the series as late as 1925. Because of its sheer size and complexity the longest work in the series, *Foxue da cidian* was not published until June 1921, but its preface and front

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<sup>42</sup> Ding, *Nianpu*, 357. Compiling the dictionary was said to have taken eight years, and it was completed in June of 1921, with an edition published through the Shanghai Medical Press the next year. See ZJFRZ, 427; Ding, *Nianpu*, 1929.

<sup>43</sup> Ding, *Nianpu*, 318, 330. ZJFRZ, 424-425. Yu Lingbo claims that Ding had been publishing Buddhist scriptures as early as 1912, but I have not found any other evidence of this. Some accounts of Ding's turn toward Buddhist studies are mentioned in Kiely, "Spreading the Dharma with the Mechanized Press", 193. See also Ding, *Foxue congshu*, 29. Yu writes that a bout with a serious illness in 1914, along with the death of his mother in the same year, forced Ding to reconsider his orientation to "worldly matters", but Ding's autochronology records his mother dying in March 1920. Ding, *Nianpu*, 381.

<sup>44</sup> Ding further notes in his preface to 佛學起信編 (1919) that from the age of 40 he became fond of reading Buddhist scriptures.



matter were already being published as part of the series in 1919.<sup>45</sup>

The most numerous titles in the series and the earliest to be published are annotated editions of Chinese Buddhist scriptures, and include some of the most central works in the East Asian Buddhist canon. Ding's *Jin'gang bore poluomi jing jianzhu* 金剛般若波羅蜜經箋註 (Annotated *Diamond Sūtra*) contains many of the features of the other annotated scriptures and can serve as an outline of his approach to the genre: it has a preface that introduces the theme of the text and notes bibliographic considerations such as different extant translations, a set of miscellaneous notes on annotation (*jianjing zaji* 箋經雜記) that outlines the larger exegetical context, and a record of miraculous events (*lingyi ji* 靈異記) associated with the sūtra.<sup>46</sup> The book begins with prefatory material that guides the reader through the historical and interpretive context of the sūtra, including listing bibliographic information on the six commonly cited translations of the *Diamond Sūtra*. Ding then notes that much confusion has arisen from using any of the five translations other than that of *Kumārajīva*

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<sup>45</sup> Cai Yunchen, who edited a reprint edition of the series, based his choice of which texts to include in his reprint on the 1918 series catalogue appended to *Annotated Essential Records of Buddhist Scriptures* 佛經精華錄箋註. See Ding, *Foxue congshu*, preface, 5. The catalogue itself is on p. 1520. For a later catalogue of the series, see “*Foxue congshu* 佛學叢書,” *Shijie Fojiao jushilin linkan* 世界佛教居士林林刊, No. 10, August 1925, 12. Cai did not include *Foxue da cidian* in his reprint due to its size and the fact that the Huayan lianshe 華嚴蓮社 in Taiwan had already reprinted it by that time.

<sup>46</sup> Ding's *Great Dictionary of Buddhist Studies* defines *lingyi* 靈異 as “an abstruse, inconceivable phenomenon.” See Ding Fubao, *Foxue da cidian* 佛學大辭典, Taipei: Huayan lianshe, 1956 [1921]. In using this term rather than the more conventional *ganying* 感應, he may have been following the ninth-century Japanese text *Record of Miracles in Recompense to Good and Evil Manifesting in Japanese Lands* (Nihongoku genhō zenaku ryōiki 日本国現報善惡靈異記). See FGC, 1452. The *Diamond Sūtra* is also one of the most often read and quoted scriptural texts that is included in the series.

(Jiumoluoshi 鳩摩羅什, 344-413), which is the one that he uses, but that all the translations must be compared to each other in order to properly understand the text. He also identifies three key concepts present in the text: essence (*benti* 本體), practice (*xiuxing* 修行), and the “final goal” (*jiujing* 究竟). Ultimately all these concepts return to the four “cases” of existence, non-existence, not-existence and not-non-existence (*wuyou, fei wuyou* 無有, 非無有), something cannot be described with language and words (*yuyan wenzi* 語言文字).<sup>47</sup> He proceeds to explain this with reference to the three types of Buddha nature postulated by Zhiyan 智儼 (602-668) in his exegesis of the *Huayan Sūtra* 華嚴經, providing copious citations of places in the *Diamond Sūtra* where these concepts might be found.<sup>48</sup> Ding also makes use of the preface to describe to the reader some of the circumstances under which the annotated scripture was compiled. He states that while writing his annotations and exegesis he maintained a purified mind and body, cut off all extreme thoughts, and took extreme care with the meaning of each individual character. He also expresses the hope that his work has not only improved on past annotation efforts — which he later criticizes as either good but relying too much on specialized Buddhist vocabulary, or easy to understand but full of mistakes — but has also preserved the teachings passed down by the ancients without corrupting them with his own words. Finally he offers a series of stories pulled from history that demonstrate the power of the sūtra to produce miracles and unusual occurrences, ranging from the extension of one’s lifespan, to the granting of sons, to banishing ghosts and protection from weapons.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ding, *Foxue congshu*, 2575. The four cases are the four logical possibilities of all things and phenomena, expounded in *Mādhyamika* thought.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 2576-2578. The cited passages all have to do with phenomena being simultaneously not themselves; for example, one passage states that when one sees that all characteristics are not characteristics, one sees the Buddha.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 2578-2579, 2586-2610.

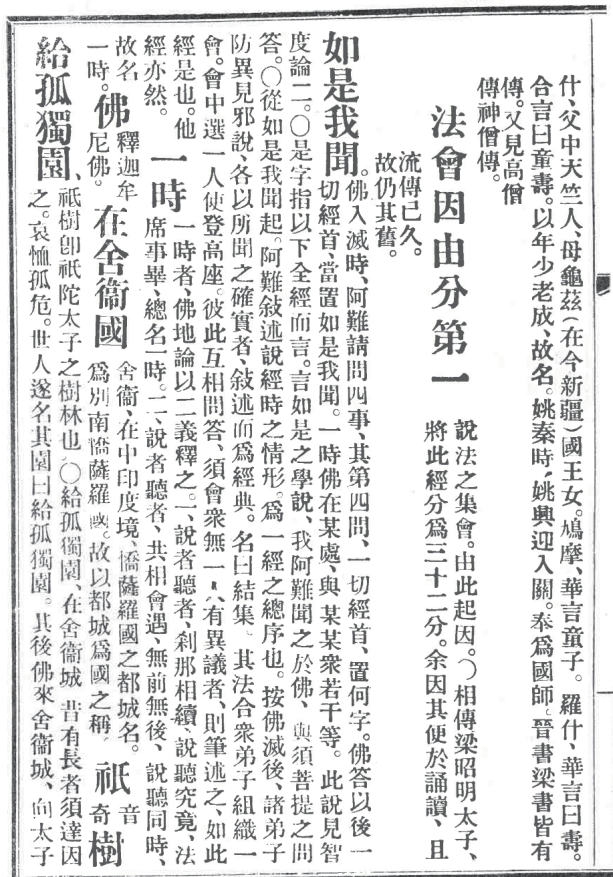


Figure 3: Sample page from Ding Fubao's Annotated *Diamond Sūtra*

The exegesis and annotation (*jianzhu* 箋註) in Ding's annotated scriptural texts take the form of interlinear notes, printed in a smaller font arranged in half-columns that follow the phrase being discussed. In his general preface to the series, Ding writes that his style of annotation is modeled upon the type of exegesis (*xungu* 訓詁) employed for the Chinese classics, following annotated

editions of the *Erya* 爾雅 (The Literary Expositor) and the *Maoshi* 毛詩 (Book of Songs with Mao Prefaces) in citing passages from a wide array of secondary sources in order to explicate the main text. The similarity of Ding's works to annotated editions of classical texts was noted in the advertisements and book catalogues printed in the Buddhist periodical *Shijie Fojiao jushilin linkan* 世界佛教居士林刊 (Magazine of the World Buddhist Lay Association) and elsewhere.<sup>50</sup> Each phrase of the original scriptural text, sometimes as few as two characters, is followed by Ding's explanation of the phrase's terms and meaning, with inline citations of passages in related texts that support the interpretation. These texts include other canonical scriptures, commentaries and other annotated editions, often noting the division or section (Ch. *pin* 品; Skt. *varga*) of the work where the cited passage can be found, although page numbers are never used to cite passages since neither standard printed editions nor the page numbering scheme of the Taishō Canon had yet come into widespread use.

Ding's exegesis is extremely careful and thorough, and assumes little to no previous knowledge on the part of the reader. For example, the first three phrases of the first section of the *Diamond Sūtra* in Chinese and in Charles Muller's translation are as follows:

如是我聞，一時佛在舍衛國祇樹給孤獨園，與大比丘眾千二百五十人俱。

Thus I have heard. Once, the Buddha was staying in the Jetavana Grove in Śrāvastī with a community of 1250 monks.<sup>51</sup>

With Ding's added interlinear notes, these two lines occupy

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<sup>50</sup> ZJFRZ, 425. The advertisements appear as Anonymous, "*Foxue congshu* 佛學叢書." See, for example, MFQB 7:76.

<sup>51</sup> Chinese text from the Chinese Buddhist Electronic Text Association (CBETA) 中華電子佛典協會, <http://www.cbeta.org/>. English translation from: [http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond\\_sutra.html](http://www.acmuller.net/bud-canon/diamond_sutra.html).

half a page in the annotated edition, with approximately 460 characters of exegesis used to explicate 29 characters of sūtra.<sup>52</sup> The notes describe how the community of monks, led by *Ānanda* 阿難, assembled after the death of the Buddha to assemble the scriptures based on what they had heard him preach; how the *Fodi jing lun* 佛地經論 (Treatise on the Buddha-bhūmi Sūtra) interprets the word “once” in two different ways;<sup>53</sup> that “the Buddha” refers to Śākyamuni Buddha; that Śrāvastī was a city in northern Kośala in central India, and so on. In addition, he offers a pronunciation guide for uncommon characters and readings of characters, such as 祇 (*qi*) when it appears as part of “Jetavana,” by noting a homophonous character, in this case 奇 (*qi*). The annotations included here differ from those that would eventually be included in Ding’s dictionary *Foxue da cidian*, indicating that he sought to explicate each term within the context that suited the particular work, rather than in the more general sense provided by the dictionary.<sup>54</sup>

Ding’s annotations thus have several functions, all of which are intended to help guide the novice reader through unfamiliar textual territory, and to help them better apprehend the teachings of

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<sup>52</sup> See Ding, *Foxue congbao*, 2612-2613. Even this level of detail is only an average; sometimes a single phrase of classical text is followed by over a full page of exegesis. In the 1920 work *Detailed Annotated Heart Sūtra* 心經詳註, Ding replaces an earlier annotated version of the scripture, which he felt was too brief, with an even more detailed version where a single phrase is usually followed by several pages of annotations. See *Ibid.*, 2475-2478 for the preface to this work.

<sup>53</sup> As meaning either that the speaking and the hearing of the sūtra were separated by only a instant (*chana* 剎那), or that they occur at the exact same time.

<sup>54</sup> For example, the entry for 一時 mentions its meaning as “once”, notes that all the early sutras begin with “Thus I have heard. Once.....”, and provides a more metaphysical interpretation from Zhiyi’s 智顗 Commentary on the *Guan wuliangshou jing* 觀無量壽經疏. See also DDB, 「觀經疏」.

the scriptures for themselves. The annotations help readers whose literacy is based on classical texts by using a style that would be familiar to them; they provide a bibliographic map of related texts to help the reader branch out into the larger conceptual and textual world of the Buddhist traditions; they remind the reader of the importance of comparative study and of paying attention to the contextual meanings of individual terms; and they empower the reader to ultimately interpret the meaning of the scriptures for themselves by following the same methods of textual study and lexicographical research as Ding demonstrates in his own work. In doing so, Ding encourages the reader toward his vision of what Buddhist Studies ought to be, which is to approach reading as an engagement with a *network* of texts, all sharing references and concepts, which must be understood in relation to each other if they are to be understood correctly. He portrays this approach as the central task of Buddhist Studies, and as one which corrects the errors of the past and more closely approaches the original intent of the scriptures.<sup>55</sup>

The core of Ding's approach is thus to put the authority of interpretation in the hands of the reader, and to empower them to use their own critical faculties to understand the scriptural teachings. One important aspect of this is the inclusion of the miracle tales in his annotated editions, which provide evidence to the reader that these teachings are not only genuine, but have also manifested recorded effects in the world throughout history. In the section "Record of *Diamond Sūtra* miracles 金剛經靈異記", he presents examples of strange and wondrous occurrences associated with reciting or possessing the scripture.<sup>56</sup> It includes stories from Tang- and Song-dynasty collections of anecdotes, grouped under fourteen headings, and is similar to thematic collections of miracle

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<sup>55</sup> Ding, *Foxue congshu*, 2578.

<sup>56</sup> Ding, *Foxue congshu*, 2586-2610.

tales that were produced by Daoxuan 道宣 (596-667) among others, which themselves assembled stories from a range of other sources.<sup>57</sup>

These stories feature much more prominently in the second category of books within Ding's *Buddhist Studies* series: collections of evidentiary tales that are designed as books for beginners. In these books Ding and his collaborators collect stories and tales from classical literature as evidence for the truth of the Buddhist teachings, with a particular focus on proving the existence of spirits and the law of karmic response, by which immoral deeds are inevitably repaid with supernatural punishments. In the years following the publication of Yang's *Fojiao chuxue keben* in 1906, commercial presses in Shanghai had begun to publish their own introductory Buddhist books. *Foxue dagang* 佛學大綱 (Outline of Buddhist Studies) by Xie Meng 謝蒙 (Xie Wuliang 謝無量, 1884-1964), published by Zhonghua Books 中華書局 in 1916, has one volume that surveys the history of Buddhism from the life of Śākyamuni to the formation of the Chinese Buddhist schools, with the second volume focusing on the foundations of Buddhist doctrine, epistemology, and ethics. *Foxue yijie* 佛學易解 (Simple Explication of Buddhist Studies), published by the Shanghai Commercial Press 上海商務印書館 in 1917 and later reprinted in 1919 and 1926, was written by Jia Fengzhen 賈豐臻 (fl. 1930s),

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<sup>57</sup> See Koichi Shinohara 篠原亨一, "Dao-xuan's Collection of Miracle Stories about 'Supernatural Monks'," *Chung-Hwa Buddhist Journal*, April 1990, 319-379. Accessed from: <http://ccbs.ntu.edu.tw/FULLTEXT/JR-BJ001/koichi.htm>.

<sup>58</sup> Xie was a schoolteacher and scholar of Chinese literature and Buddhist history. See the very short introduction to the reprint edition of his book in *Xiandai Foxue daxi* 現代佛學大系 (Great Collection of Contemporary Buddhist Studies), Vol. 46. Xie uses 心理學 to describe the second field covered in the latter volume, and although this term is used to denote psychology in modern Chinese, I have translated it as epistemology because the section deals with the teachings of the *dharma-lakṣaṇa* 法相, *prajñā* 般若, and *tathāgata-garbha*

who later published an introductory book on philosophy and a history of *lixue* 理學 (Neo-Confucian studies).<sup>58</sup> These commercial publications indicate that in the 1910s and 1920s there was already at least a small market for texts that sought to explain Buddhist history and thought in an elementary way, although in these two cases they were written by authors who were more closely connected to the study of ideas and history, rather than engaged Buddhist practitioners.

There are eight titles in Ding's series that can be classified as collections of evidentiary tales. One of the earliest, *Foxue qixin bian* 佛學起信編 (Collection of Awakening Faith in Buddhist Studies, 1919), includes a preface by Ding that outlines the reasoning behind collecting the material for these works:

The aspects of the Buddhist scriptures that most cause people to doubt them are causality spanning the three periods [of past, present and future], and rebirth in the six realms. Because of these, when beginners read the scriptures, they usually have suspicions..... If one wishes to plumb the abstruse teachings of the Buddhist scriptures, one must take faith in mind (*xinxin* 信心)<sup>59</sup> as one's basis. Further, those who wish to obtain faith in mind cannot not but first seek proof of causality spanning the three periods and rebirth in the six realms. This type of evidence is not something that kind be satisfied by empty words, not something that one could exhaustively obtain even after tens of years of reading.<sup>60</sup>

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如來藏 schools. Jia also wrote an article on religion in education that was published in 1927 in the Buddhist periodical *Dayun yuekan* 大雲月刊 (Great Cloud Monthly). See MFQ 138:120-126.

<sup>59</sup> Here I follow Shengyen's rendering of the term in his translation of *Xinxin ming* 信心銘.

<sup>60</sup> Ding, *Foxue congshu*, 2:147-148.



Ding proceeds to relate how when he himself became fond of reading Buddhist scriptures in 1914, he searched for textual evidence to support those concepts that were difficult to believe, and how in this and other works he has collected relevant proofs from the scholars and literati of ages past to provide the reader with sufficient evidence to cultivate “faith in mind”. Ding’s books for beginners are overwhelmingly focused on evidential matters. Apart from offering evidence for causality and rebirth as mentioned in Ding’s preface, the books offer stories as evidence proving the existence of various types of spirits, the underworld, and rewards for filiality and generosity, with most themes appearing in more than one title. They also have several sections that explore the historical development of Buddhism in Indian and Chinese history; a different type of evidence than that of narrative tales, but one which would become increasingly important in Buddhist publications as historical studies began to take shape.<sup>61</sup> Additionally, most of these books offer guidance on further reading, either by listing the titles and abstracts of Ding’s annotated scriptures as does *Foxue chujie* 佛學初階 (Initial Stages in Buddhist Studies, 1920), or even more directly through advertisements for other publications by Ding’s press.<sup>62</sup>

These issues of belief in the existence of spirits and the need for textual evidence to support such beliefs are explicated most clearly in the first chapter of *Foxue cuoyao* 佛學撮要 (Elementary Outline of Buddhist Studies), a brief but concise title in the series first published in 1920 and later reprinted in 1935. The first chapter explains the genesis of the book through a rhetorical conversation

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<sup>61</sup> For example, the entire second volume of *Foxue zhinan* 佛學指南 (Guide to Buddhist Studies, 1919) is a series of surveys of the historical and doctrinal outlines of Buddhism. See Ding, *Foxue congshu*, 2:356-374, 433-488.

<sup>62</sup> “Yiyue jingdian 宜閱經典” (Scriptures Suitable for Reading) is actually the eighth “stage” of Buddhist study described in the book. See Ding, *Foxue congshu*, 2:755-766. Advertisements appear on 2:680, 890.

between Ding and fellow Wuxi native Han Xuewen 韓學文, and this conversational mode is continued through the rest of the book, with Han asking questions and Ding offering responses supported by selected passages from classical texts.<sup>63</sup> Han brings up a passage from a book on medicine that Ding had edited which states that no spirit exists after death, and extends this to argue that the teachings of the Buddhist scriptures, and indeed of all religions, are thus false superstitions that ought to be swept away. Ding replies that he edited that book some twenty-five years ago, and that back then his experience and learning were so narrow as to cause that mistaken view; he then cites a number of experts in different fields of learning who all believe in the existence of spirits, saying that only those who are still at an early stage of reading and study would deny the existence of spirits.<sup>64</sup> As for the charge that such beliefs are superstition, Ding points out that superstitions are only so if they are not true, whereas spirits, karma, and rebirth all have definite proof, and encourages Han to read certain books to see the evidence for himself. After a night of study, Han is, of course, converted from his views.<sup>65</sup> The texts and selections that Ding instructed Han to read were none other than four other texts that appear in Ding's series, as well as some essential sections from *Dengbudeng guan zalu* 等不等觀雜錄

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<sup>63</sup> Ding, *Foxue congshu*, 1:33-39. Whether Han was a historical person is as yet unknown.

<sup>64</sup> Han also mentions that those who study new learning are all calling out loudly to expel these “absurd doctrines”, and some publish printed material that is spread to every province. The experts Ding mentions in response include one Yu Zhonghuan 俞仲還, who twenty years previously had established the Three Equalities Academy 三等學堂 in Chong'an Temple 崇安寺, and who later also helped establish Wenming Books, the publishing house through which Ding had issued many of his early works.

<sup>65</sup> Han further asks Ding to guide him in the reading of Buddhist scriptures, saying “Sir, you first used medicine to treat my body, then used scholarship to treat my soul. Once the body is exhausted, the soul lasts forever, how can I repay you!”

(Miscellaneous Records of Observing Equality and Inequality) by Yang Wenhui. The chapters that follow this exchange continue this theme of presenting evidence for the existence of spirits and other supernatural phenomena to satisfy Han's questions regarding Buddhist doctrines.<sup>66</sup> Such questions of belief and of evidence were important ones for Buddhist writers of this period; books on science and logic were being widely translated and published, and interest in spiritualism in both the West and in China challenged the truth claims of scientism in several intellectual arenas.<sup>67</sup>

Ding's mention of *Dengbudeng guan zalu* is one example of the strong links that connect his series back to Yang Wenhui. Many of the collections of evidentiary tales were edited by Mei Guangxi 梅光羲 (Mei Xieyun 梅擷芸, 1880-1947), who had studied under Yang from 1902, and who was made one of the trustees of the Jinling Scriptural Press after Yang's death. He was also a member of Xu Weiru's scriptural recitation society in Beijing, and a co-founder of the Beijing Scriptural Press; he was known in particular for his studies of the Consciousness-only (*weishi* 唯識) school of Buddhist philosophy.<sup>68</sup> Wan Jun 萬鈞, who would contribute

<sup>66</sup> The texts are 佛學初階, 佛學起信編, 佛學之基礎, and 佛學指南. On 等不等觀雜錄, see Goldfuss, 231.

<sup>67</sup> See Erik Hammerstrom, "Buddhists Discuss Science in Modern China (1895-1949)," Ph.D. Dissertation, Indiana University, 2010. Huang Kewu 黃克武, 〈民國初年上海的靈學研究——以「上海靈學會」為例〉 (Research into Spiritualism in Early Republican Shanghai: A Study of the Shanghai Spiritualism Society), 中央研究院近代史研究所集刊, Vol. 55, March 2007, 99-136.

<sup>68</sup> See ZFJS, 2:650-660; See also the short eulogy by Fan Gunong 范古農 published in 1947, MFQ 89:235. *Haichaoyin* published a short article in 1945 on the occasion of his 65<sup>th</sup> birthday, MFQ 202:113-114. One of Mei's best-known works is *Essential Outline of the Faxiang School* 相宗綱要, first published in 1920 in Jinan 濟南 where Mei was posted at the time, and then in 1921 by Shanghai Commercial Press. See *Fozang jiyao*, 21:113-164. A supplementary volume later appeared in 1926.

the annotations to the 1921 edition of Yang's outline of Buddhist lineages, is credited as the source of many of the stories cited in the collections. Yet Ding's approach to compiling Buddhist books for beginners differs significantly in several respects from that taken by Yang over a decade earlier. Whereas Yang was concerned with the lack of Buddhist scriptures available to read and composed his primer following the well-established model of the *Sanzi jing*, Ding saw the number and variety of available scriptures as a challenge for the novice, and specifically addressed their difficulties in understanding scriptural language and in accepting claims of supernatural phenomena in his books for beginners. Yang did obtain scriptural exemplars from Japan but was not altogether comfortable with contemporary Japanese Buddhist movements, while Ding was an accomplished translator from modern Japanese, basing his dictionary on that written by Oda Tokunō 織田得能 (1860-1911) and published in 1917.<sup>69</sup>

With Ding's collectanea, we see some of the earliest development of "Buddhist Studies" among Chinese Buddhists, with a new focus on textual interpretation and comparative studies intended to better apprehend the teachings of the scriptures. The term *Foxue* 佛學 was a relatively new one at the time, its origins dating back perhaps no further than 1895 in Japan, and 1902 in China.<sup>70</sup> It joined a host of other terms used to describe

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<sup>69</sup> For a dramatized account of Oda compiling his dictionary, see Kōsai Chigiri, "Tokuno Oda", in *Buddhist Plays from Japanese Literature*, translated by Umeyo Hirano, Tokyo: C.I.I.B., 1962, 60-74. For an outline of some early Japanese Buddhist reference works, as well as those that followed later in the Shōwa and Heisei eras, see Yu Chongsheng 余崇生, 〈日本佛教工具書編輯特色略述〉, *Fojiao tushuguan guankan* 佛教圖書館館刊, No. 47, June 2008, 98-102.

<sup>70</sup> Read as *futsugaku*, 佛學 was first used in Japanese as a combination phonetic-semantic term (parallel to *rangaku* 蘭學), meaning French Studies. The first instance of the term being used as *butsugaku* that I have found is Saeki Hōdō

modern concepts that were adopted from the Japanese in the decade following the first Sino-Japanese War, when Chinese scholars sought to learn the techniques by which Japan was able to modernize its military, economy, and society.<sup>71</sup> Ding does not explicitly discuss his use of this term, which appears in both the series title and in many of the individual works. By denoting his subject with *foxue* rather than *fojiao* 佛教, *fofa* 佛法, or *fohua* 佛化, however, Ding may have been trying to avoid some of the negative associations that late-Qing scholars had attached to these latter terms in their criticisms of Buddhism's decline. This move also serves to situate the subject of the series alongside other modern knowledges signified by similar terms, such as science (*kexue* 科學,) mathematics (*shuxue* 數學,) and perhaps most significantly, medicine (*yixue* 醫學). In his series for beginners, Ding sought to situate newcomers to the field by directing them toward exegetical methods rather than memorization, a shift in the means of engaging with Buddhist texts that would only grow in influence over the following decades.

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佐伯法導, *Butsugaku sansho: kakushū hikkei* 佛學三書：各宗必携, Kyōto: Hōzōkan 法藏館, Meiji 28 [1895]. The earliest use of *Foxue* in Chinese that I have found is a 1912 catalogue from Yang Wenhui's Jinling Scriptural Press, entitled *Foxue shumu biao* 佛學書目表. See Yang Wenhui 楊文會, Zhou Jizhi 周繼旨, ed., *Yang Renshan quanji* 楊仁山全集, Hefei: Huangshan shushe, 2000, 344-368. Also see Goldfuss, 60-67. Given Yang's close association with Nanjō Bunyu 南条文雄, and with Japanese Buddhist texts, he may have been a key point of transmission for this term to enter the Chinese lexicon.

- <sup>71</sup> See Lu Yan, *Re-understanding Japan: Chinese Perspectives, 1895-1945*, Honolulu: Association for Asian Studies and University of Hawai'i Press, 2004; Federico Masini, *The Formation of Modern Chinese Lexicon and Its Evolution Toward a National Language: The Period from 1840 to 1898*, Rome: Department of Oriental Studies, University of Rome, 1993.

#### 4. Master Shengyen and Dharma Drum Publications in New York

The first half of the twentieth century was an era of great change in Chinese Buddhist publishing, as new genres and new print technologies were met with new ways of interacting with texts. Another turning point can be seen in the second half of the century, when interactions between East Asian and Western Buddhists produced a growing number of publications about Buddhism, many of them specifically designed for beginners, in English and other European languages. One of the major figures involved in the flood of English-language Buddhist books was the Chinese Chan monastic teacher Shengyen 聖嚴, who devoted a great deal of his life to teaching in the United States. Between 1982 and 1997, Dharma Drum Publications in Elmhurst, New York, published at least nine titles edited or authored by Shengyen. Most of these works were later reprinted by larger commercial presses, including North Atlantic Books and Shambala Publications, thereby gaining a wide circulation that mirrored the growing popularity of Shengyen, his teachings, and the Buddhist institutions he helped establish. During the early period of his work in North America, however, Shengyen was relatively unknown, his teaching groups were quite small and intimate, and Dharma Drum Publications (DDP) itself was a “small operation, always short handed.”<sup>12</sup> Looking at the first two decades of Shengyen’s English-language publications, we can see a strong interplay between his teaching, his community of students, and the type of texts he wrote for readers interested in learning more about Buddhism.

The Buddhism reflected in these books for beginners has at its core two elements that are in tension with each other. On the one hand the meditation retreat is consistently held up as the most authentic form of Chan practice, one example of the longstanding

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<sup>12</sup> Jimmy Yu 俞永峰 (果谷), personal communication to the author, April 17, 2012.

Chan self-understanding as a “special transmission outside the scriptures; no dependence upon words and letters.”<sup>73</sup> Yet the reader is, at least for the moment, learning about meditative experience through the medium of the book, hearing about these experiences second-hand, and reading lectures that themselves quote widely from Buddhist scriptural texts. This tension between experience/meditation/insight and knowledge/wisdom/learning runs throughout Buddhist history in general and Chan history in particular. These early publications by Shengyen grappled with this longstanding issue, and reflect the content of other similar publications, developments in the Chan religious community in New York, and a wider context of both Chinese- and English-language books for beginners in twentieth-century Buddhism.

The outlines of Shengyen’s biography are quite well known and need not be retraced here;<sup>74</sup> I will instead review a few select aspects of his life and work from the 1960s to the early 1980s that are especially relevant when considering his later teachings and English-language publications. Throughout the 1960s Shengyen published a number of books in Chinese, mainly as part of the *Shengyan fashi wenji* 聖嚴法師文集 (Collected Works of Shengyen) that was issued by the *Jueshi xunkan* (Awakened World Weekly) Publishing House 覺世旬刊社 in Taipei and the Kaiyuan Temple Buddhist Scripture Distributor 開元寺佛經流通處 in Tainan. *Jueshi xunkan* was a Buddhist periodical founded in 1957 by Jiankang Books 健康書局 in Taipei, and in 1962 its management had been entrusted to Master Xingyun 星雲 (1927-).<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> Attributed to Bodhidharma, the first Chinese patriarch of Chan. Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Buddhism: A History*, Vol. 1, Bloomington, IN: World Wisdom, 2005, 85. Also appears in the “Flower Sermon” where Śākyamuni recognizes Mahākāśyapa’s insight.

<sup>74</sup> For a succinct biography, see FGC, 5589. A brief autobiography appears in *Getting the Buddha Mind*, 23-35.

<sup>75</sup> Xingyun 星雲, *Jueshi luncong* 覺世論叢, Gaoxiong xian: Foguang chubanshe,

Shengyen's books from this era, which addressed beginners on Buddhist fundamentals and the relationship of Buddhist culture to the wider world, culminated in 1965 with *Zhengxin de Fojiao* 正信的佛教 (Orthodox Buddhism), perhaps his best-known and certainly his most-often reprinted work in Chinese. *Zhengxin* is a slim, accessible volume structured as a series of questions and answers about Buddhist topics, written in a colloquial and straightforward style.<sup>76</sup> At the time Shengyen was working under Shi Dongchu 釋東初 (1908-1977) at the Chung-hwa Institute of Buddhist Culture 中華佛教文化館, which Dongchu had established in 1955 at Fazang Temple 法藏寺 in Beitou 北投, just north of Taipei.<sup>77</sup> Publishing was an important aspects of Dongchu's work: he had been a student of Taixu 太虛 (1890-1947), the most prolific author and edition of Buddhist publications in China, and in the 1960s and 1970s was himself engaged in publishing a series of historical studies of Chinese Buddhism. Both authors published with a purpose; Taixu to win over others to his vision of Buddhist reforms, Dongchu to convince readers of the importance of Buddhism in modern Chinese history and its continued relevance to the Republic of China in the post-1949 world.<sup>78</sup>

In 1969 Shengyen went to Japan to study toward a doctorate in Buddhist Literature at Risshō University 立正大學, which he earned in 1975 with a dissertation on late-Ming Chinese Buddhism that focused on Ouyi Zhixu 藕益智旭, one of the most eminent monks of his day, and much read and studied in early Republican-

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1991, preface from 1965. Electronic version available here: <http://www.fgsedmonton.ca/article/xingyun/24.html>.

<sup>76</sup> See, for example, the paperback, 16th edition printed in 1995 by Dongchu chuban she 東初出版社.

<sup>77</sup> The temple had originally been built in 1928 as a Sōtō temple when Taiwan was under Japanese rule.

<sup>78</sup> Don A. Pittman, *Toward a Modern Chinese Buddhism: Taixu's Reforms*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001.



era China.<sup>79</sup> Soon after returning to Taiwan, Shengyen was granted formal Dharma transmission in the Caodong 曹洞 line of Chan from Dongchu, which authorized him to teach disciples of his own.<sup>80</sup> While Taixu had traveled to England in his youth and to Southeast Asia during the war, Dongchu did not travel outside of China and Taiwan. After returning from his six years abroad Shengyen would, from that winter, spend a great deal of time overseas especially in the United States, and would continue to divide his year between Taiwan and the U.S. until his poor health prevented him from traveling. In doing so he would engage with the growing North American Buddhist community and help to introduce his Buddhist scholarship, practice, and publishing to an English-reading public.

First encouraged to go to America by Ban Tetsugyu 伴鐵牛 (1910-1996), one of his teachers in the Tohoku region of Japan, Master Shengyen first visited the USA in the winter of 1975.<sup>81</sup> As early as December 1976 he is cited as the Teacher-Advisor of the “Special Chan Class” at the Buddhist Association of the United States 美國佛教會, today still located on West 231<sup>st</sup> Street in the Bronx. From March 1977 the class began to publish *Ch’an Magazine*, in which appeared translated transcriptions of Shengyen’s lectures and reports from students on their meditation experiences.<sup>82</sup> In the summer of 1977 he gave a series of ten

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<sup>79</sup> *Buddha Mind*, 33-34. The dissertation was published that year in Kyōto, see table 1. On Ouyi, see Beverley Foulks, “Living Karma: The Religious Practices of Ouyi Zhixu (1599-1655)”, Ph.D. Dissertation, Harvard University, 2009.

<sup>80</sup> He later also received transmission in the Linji 臨濟 (Jp.: Rinzaï) line from Lingyuan 靈源 (1902-1988).

<sup>81</sup> *Buddha Mind*, 34. On Ban Tetsugyu, see: <http://terebess.hu/zen/mesterek/BanTetsugyu.html>.

<sup>82</sup> BAUS maintains a website: <http://www.baus.org/en/>. *Ch’an Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 1, March, 1977. The lectures and experience reports that were originally in Chinese were translated by Chün-fang Yü 于君方, then a professor at Rutgers University.



Figure 4: Sample hand-drawn cover image from *Ch'an Magazine*

lectures on the *Platform Sūtra*, parts of which were printed in the magazine, and in late 1977 after hearing of Dongchu's death he visited Taiwan, and later continued to return there to attend to the Chung-hwa Institute and the Institute for Translation of the Tripitaka.<sup>83</sup> Some time in the late 1970s he also gave a series of lectures at Columbia University which evidently inspired a number

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<sup>83</sup> *Ch'an Magazine*, Vol. 1, No. 6, Fall 1978, "News".

of undergraduate and postgraduate students to start attending his lectures and retreats.<sup>84</sup> By the summer of 1980 the group was relocated to a newly-established Chan Center in Elmhurst, Queens and a non-profit organization was set up, named the Institute of Chung-hwa Buddhist Culture after its “sister organization” in Taiwan. *Ch’an Magazine* continued to publish retreat reports from students, translations from Chinese Buddhist scriptural texts, and recorded lectures by Shengyen; the magazine would provide much of the material and editorial expertise for the books later published by their in-house imprint, Dharma Drum Publications.

When Shengyen came to the US in the late 1970s, he encountered a society that was very unlike that for which Taixu and Dongchu had written. Readers of Buddhist books in China and Taiwan shared a common linguistic and cultural background in which Buddhist topics were at least known if not necessarily familiar subjects. In the English-reading U.S., however, one had to take into account the fact that the average reader might have little to no knowledge about Buddhism beyond its barest outlines. To be sure, books had been published about Buddhism, Chan, and Zen in English for many decades, including Victorian-era works such as *The Light of Asia: The Great Renunciation* (London: 1879) by Edwin Arnold (1832-1904), and more recently *An Introduction to Zen Buddhism* (Kyoto: 1934; London and New York, 1949) by D.T. Suzuki 鈴木大拙 (貞太郎) (1870-1966). In the late 1970s and in to the 1980s the number of books available in the U.S. on Buddhist topics was still growing, and being joined by a host of works on East Asian religion, mysticism, philosophy, and related topics.<sup>85</sup> Buddhist books in the U.S. were then largely written as books for

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<sup>84</sup> Christopher Marano, personal communication, April 17, 2012.

<sup>85</sup> See for example Christopher Marano’s introduction to *The Sword of Wisdom*, 1. See also the first section of Peter N. Gregory, “Describing the Elephant: Buddhism in America”, *Religion and American Culture: A Journal of Interpretation*, Vol. 11, No. 2, Summer 2001, 233-263.

beginners, as they are to a large extent today as well. Like Yang Wenhui and Ding Fubao, many Buddhists in Republican China had paid close attention to the need for introductory textual sources, designed for readers who were just beginning to learn about Buddhism. Other contemporary introductory works include such titles as *Foxue ABC* 佛學 ABC (ABCs of Buddhist Studies), *Chuji xue Fo zhaiyao* 初機學佛摘要 (Essentials for Beginning Buddhist Studies), *Foxue rumen* 佛學入門 (Rudimentaries of Buddhist Studies), and *Chuji xiandao* 初機先導 (Guide for Beginners).<sup>66</sup> Thus Shengyen could draw upon a history of English-language books for beginners on the one hand, particularly books by authors affiliated with Japanese Zen, and another recent genre of Chinese books for beginners on the other, authors of which included his own grand-master Taixu and other well-known Buddhist authors in Republican China. In both cases these books had to guide their readers though the most basic aspects of religious thought and practice.

The earliest English-language book written by Shengyen and published by DDP is *Getting the Buddha Mind*, first published in 1982 and later reprinted in 1989.<sup>67</sup> Most of the content of *Buddha Mind* is taken from lectures given at meditation retreats in New York between 1975 and 1980, and according to the prefatory material it was published in response to readers of *Ch'an Magazine* who had expressed an interest in seeing this material appear in book form.<sup>68</sup> The book has four sections: the first includes a brief

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<sup>66</sup> See S1295, S1290; Lianwu 蓮午, *Foxue rumen*, Beijing: s.n., [1924], [S1285]; Yinguang, *Chuji xiandao*, Suzhou: Honghua she, 1933, [S0923].

<sup>67</sup> Notably there was an English-language book by Shengyen that predates *Buddha Mind*, but it was not published in the U.S.. *The Advantages One May Derive from Zen Meditation* was published in Taipei by Torch of Wisdom Publishing House 慧炬出版社 in 1978. On the TOW organization, see: <http://www.towisdom.org.tw>.

<sup>68</sup> *Buddha Mind*, 1.

autobiographical sketch by Shengyen, followed by an outline of the Chan seven-day retreat (*chanqi* 禪七; often *sesshin* 攝心 in Japanese) explaining its history, purpose, and process. The second section presents a number of lectures that were recorded at retreats, and also includes two translated Chan poems, *Guanxin ming* 觀心銘 (Contemplating Mind) by Hanshan Deqing 憨山德清 (1546-1623) and *Mozhao ming* 默照銘 (Silent Illumination) by Hongzhi Zhengjue 宏智正覺 (1091-1157), both of which are accompanied by commentaries by Shengyen. Section three has reports from retreat participants that describe their experiences in their own words, and the final section is a transcript from an interview that Shengyen gave to a New York City radio station in 1981. The book closes with a glossary of Sanskrit, Chinese, and English Buddhist terms, and a schedule of activities for Chan retreats. While the content is varied and taken from a number of sources—although it's not stated explicitly, some of these lectures likely initially appeared in *Ch'an Magazine*—it is all based on the product of the teaching relationship between Shengyen and his students: students requested that it be compiled, the lectures were directed to retreat participants, and students provide accounts of their experiences practicing at the retreat.

This focus on the experience of Chan in the book reflects the role of language, including spoken words and printed text, as a necessary but never sufficient component of the tradition. In his preface, Shengyen expresses some of this ambiguity when he states that Chan is beyond words, but it “uses language as a bridge,” and that one of the main reasons for publishing this book is to draw people in to actually practice.<sup>69</sup> In the introduction by editor Ernest Heau, Chan practice in the form of participation in a meditation retreat takes center stage, and the book itself is likened to a “pile of dead leaves”, a medium that lacks the key component of interacting with Master Shengyen in person. The only redeeming

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<sup>69</sup> *Buddha Mind*, 1-4.

quality of such a second-hand and imitative communication is that it might give the reader a small taste of the true flavour of Chan, by which is meant the experience of practice.<sup>90</sup> The accounts by practitioners, who are only cited by their initials, appear as a sort of bridge between the reader's situation as an observer, and an experience of practice.<sup>91</sup> After they describe their initial expectations, which range from skepticism to great anticipation, they relate their transformative experiences, which are all gained through meditation rather than doctrinal or philosophical study. Through them the interested reader can imagine what their own experience might be like, and establishes a template whereby the book is put aside in favour of the meditation seat.

This practice-centered focus continues in *Faith in Mind* and *Ox Herding at Morgan's Bay*, published in 1987 and 1988 respectively. *Faith in Mind* is a collection of twenty retreat lectures on the eponymous poem *Xinxin ming* 信心銘 attributed to the third Chan Patriarch Sengcan 僧璨 (?-606). The book contains a short introduction by Shengyen and a new English translation of the poem, followed by the transcribed lectures. There are no descriptions of what happens during a retreat other than what is referenced in the lectures; instead the poem and its commentary stand on their own as practice-related texts, now removed from the context in which they were originally delivered. In *Ox Herding* we find again the content based on transcriptions of lectures, this time given at a retreat at Morgan's Bay in the spring of 1987.<sup>92</sup> The Ox Herding paintings themselves, each of which is the topic of one

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<sup>90</sup> *Buddha Mind*, 5-19.

<sup>91</sup> Looking through earlier issues of *Ch'an Magazine* makes it possible to guess at the identities of the students: D.S.: Dan Stevenson; R.A.: Rikki Asher; K.S.: Karen Swaine; D.W.: Dan Wota; M.I.C.: Ma I-Chang; M.H.: Marina Heau; L.H.: Lex Hixon. Bhiksu C.C. is as yet unknown.

<sup>92</sup> Morgan's Bay is a non-sectarian Buddhist meditation center located in Surry, Maine, <http://www.morganbayzendo.org/about>.

lecture, are reproduced in the book, painted by a contemporary artist. The lectures are directed to “you”, the student, but there are also sections of questions from students with responses from Shengyen. While this is the shortest of the publications discussed so far, it is very evocative, with each image in the series prompting the lecturer to draw in stories and similes from across the broad Chan tradition. Both *Faith in Mind* and *Ox Herding* introduce the reader to a Chan text, either poetic or artistic, and uses it as the core of lectures addressing the theory and practice behind Chan meditation and insight. It is interesting to note at this point that Shengyen, who later gained a reputation for drawing upon the work of Buddhist thinkers regardless of sectarian affiliation, has so far limited his commentaries to works that fall solidly within the Chan tradition, including his lectures on the *Platform Sūtra* that only appeared in *Ch'an Magazine*.<sup>93</sup>

Focusing on a translated Buddhist text was an element that would become more prominent in the published works that followed. *Infinite Mirror*, published in 1990, is comprised of two translated texts with commentary: *Can tong qi* 參同契 (Inquiry into Matching Halves), attributed to Shitou Xiqian 石頭希遷 (700?-790?), and *Baojing sanmei ge* 寶鏡三昧歌 (Song of the Precious Mirror Samadhi), attributed to Dongshan Liangjie 洞山良价 (fl. 9<sup>th</sup> century). Shitou and Dongshan were important figures in the Caodong school of Chan, the lineage to which Shengyen had been admitted by Dongchu. The lectures were originally given as part of the Wednesday Dharma class at the Elmhurst Chan Center, a weekly event that was an opportunity to teach on topics relating to Buddhist philosophy in addition to practice. While the explanations in the book were intended to inspire practice rather than further

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<sup>93</sup> I was not able to obtain a copy of *Poetry of Enlightenment*, which is a collection of translated Chan poems. Translations and commentary for some poems also appears in *Buddha Mind*, *Faith in Mind*, *Infinite Mirror*, and *Sword of Wisdom*.



research, Shengyen expresses a wish that others might continue such scholarly work in the future.<sup>94</sup> *Sword of Wisdom* returns to the format of presenting recorded retreat lectures, in this case a series originally given between 1982 and 1985 on the subject of *Zhengdao ge* 證道歌 (The Song of Enlightenment), attributed to Yongjia Xuanjue 永嘉玄覺 (665-713). In his foreword, editor Christopher Marano reiterates the argument that the function of words and text in Chan is to get people to practice.<sup>95</sup>

*Zen Wisdom*, published in 1993 with a revised and expanded edition in 1998, breaks away from this trend of recorded lectures and textual exegesis. Beginning in 1984 an editor at *Ch'an Magazine* had suggested that a section called "Dharma View" be added to the periodical, where students could ask questions on any topic relating to Buddhism and receive a response from Shengyen.<sup>96</sup> These were later collected for publication in *Zen Wisdom*, and grouped in to three thematic categories: "Practice", "Philosophy and Doctrine", and "Social Issues". Many sections have multiple questions and answers posed by the same student in an interview format; similar to the one-on-one experience of the retreat interview (*ducan/dokusan* 獨參) but with the positions of the interlocutor and respondent reversed. The students all appear to pose their questions based on a North American cultural background; requests for more information on the details of karmic action are common, and Shengyen often makes reference to "Western values" in interpreting the *vinaya* for modern life.

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<sup>94</sup> *Infinite Mirror*, 2-3.

<sup>95</sup> *Sword of Wisdom*, 3-7.

<sup>96</sup> *Zen Wisdom*, i. By 1984 no single person was credited as the editor, but the staff included Ching Hai Shih, Ernest Heau, Marina Heau, Richard Lee, Peigwang Li, Nancy Makso, Harry Miller, Nagendra Rao, Ling-Yun Shih, and Ming-Yee Wang. See *Ch'an Magazine*, Vol. 4, No. 2, Summer 1984. The first "Dharma View" section appeared in the Fall 1984 issue, and was on the subject of "Wit and Humor in Ch'an."



He also provides some interesting observations about the role of reading and of scriptures in Buddhist practice, saying that contemporary books are just as good, in principle, as the writings of the patriarchs as long as they gain prominence in their own time. He also writes that reading scriptures has the potential to give rise to supernatural insights, giving examples from the lives of Taixu and Ouyi Zhixu.<sup>97</sup> Material from *Zen Wisdom* would later be published alongside articles from the *Ch'an Newsletter* and a translated Chinese work in 1996's *Dharma Drum*.<sup>98</sup> Guogu 果谷 (Jimmy Yu), one of Shengyen's lay disciples, was responsible for editing and translating this work, and played an even larger role in *Complete Enlightenment*, which was published in 1997. This later work is a translation of *Yuanjue jing* 圓覺經 (The Sūtra of Complete Enlightenment), with textual commentary based on a series of public lectures that Shengyen had given between 1982 and 1985.<sup>99</sup>

With Shengyen's Dharma Drum Publications, we find the content and intent of the books gradually shifting, from an experience-centered and very intimate picture of the Chan community, to a more text-based focus where reading and scripture study is encouraged alongside meditative practice. As the scope of Shengyen's work expanded, his writings became media that connected a small group of editorial and authorial volunteers with the members of a rapidly growing religious community, and finally when these books started to be reprinted by commercial presses, they linked the Ch'an Center in Elmhurst with a large English-reading market. Throughout this process of expansion and

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<sup>97</sup> *Zen Wisdom*, 132-134.

<sup>98</sup> The translated section in *Dharma Drum* is entitled "The Reality of Ch'an Practice" and consists of short stanzas on Buddhist topics.

<sup>99</sup> Here as well the lectures emphasize practice, although Guogu's comments note that his translation work helped to deepen his own understanding. *Complete Enlightenment*, 6, 11-12.

development we find interesting changes in the type of publications being produced. There is a clear theme of treating books and other publications as epiphenomenal to meditative practice and personal instruction, an aspect that is most strongly visible in earlier publications but which continues throughout the publications reviewed here. Even discourses on Buddhist doctrine or scriptural texts were originally composed as retreat lectures or guides to practice, and only afterward transcribed, translated, and edited into a published format, and their prefatory notes reiterate that their ultimate function is to inspire the individual to practice.<sup>100</sup> This functional and pedagogical focus on practice only began to fade in the 1990s, when books such as *Complete Enlightenment* began to focus more on the experience of reading and understanding scriptural texts, perhaps a sign of a maturing field of critical-constructive Buddhist scholarship.

Given the emphasis on experience and practice in the Chan tradition it should perhaps be no surprise that meditation is featured so strongly in Shengyen's English-language publications while textual learning is largely downplayed; he was "after all" admitted into both major branches of the Chan lineage. Yet this published corpus was not just a reflection of an "orthodox" Chan tradition brought in to a "modern" world, but rather something that grew out of the interaction between Shengyen's background and the culture into which he arrived. This was a dialectic that was maintained throughout the remainder of his life as he divided his time between working in Taiwan and the U.S., a dialectic in which there were several interrelated elements in play: Firstly we have the recent history of publications and Buddhist scholarship by Taixu and Dongchu, both of which were self-consciously modernist in tone and which paid a great deal of attention to contemporary fields of knowledge such as history, science, and

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<sup>100</sup> In their personal communications to the author, both Jimmy Yu and Christopher Marano have reiterated this focus on publications getting people to practice.

politics. In addition we cannot ignore the influence of modern Japanese Buddhist scholarship, to which Shengyen was introduced through his studies at Risshō University and from Japanese Zen instructors. These two were closely connected as well, since each was influenced by the other in the early twentieth century. In reading Shengyen's publications we are reading a text that was subject to these filters and influences, and which was arguably just as much a product of his religious community as it was of his own. This was a community that included with it the influence of other contemporary models of how one ought to talk about Buddhism. This heritage can be traced back to D.T. Suzuki's *Manual of Zen Buddhism* (1934), through to the post-Second World War American re-enchantment with Japan, when works such as Charles Luk's *Ch'an and Zen Teachings* (1960, 1971) and Philip Kapleau's *The Three Pillars of Zen* (1965) helped establish a new vocabulary for readers of books on Buddhism.

## 5. Conclusion: Conversion by the Book

Yang Wenhui, Ding Fubao, and Shengyen all lived in very different times and circumstances, but were linked together by a shared effort to communicate to novices what they saw were the essentials for beginners in Buddhist studies. In briefly surveying their publication and editing work, this paper has argued that in each case the elementary books they published were products not only of their own creation, but also reflected a larger historical context that includes textual traditions of pedagogy, new models of education and standards of knowledge claims, and cross-cultural relationships between East Asian and North American Buddhists. Turning the lens of print culture studies to these figures and their work reveals a wide network of influences that extends out to the larger corpus of published materials, as well as to religious communities who produced and read these texts. This network extends far beyond the content of the text itself and reminds us that in spite of their seemingly elementary nature, Buddhist books

for beginners are a central part of the intellectual and religious legacy of all three of these figures, and continue to be an important concern for the larger communities in which they participated.

**Table 1: Section titles of *Fojiao chuxue keben*<sup>100</sup>**

法界 The Dharma-realm ( <i>Dharmadhātu</i> )	六根 The Six Senses
釋迦佛生 The Life of Śākyamuni Buddha	六塵 The Six Dusts (i.e. Objects of Sensation)
集結三藏 Collecting the Tripiṭaka	十二處 The Twelve Places [of the Senses]
大法東來 The Great Dharma Comes East	十八界 The Eighteen Realms [of the Senses]
十宗 The Ten Lineages	轉八識成四智 Turning the Eight Consciousnesses into the Four Wisdoms
成實宗 The Satyasiddhi Lineage	三身 The Three Bodies [of a Buddha]
俱舍宗 The Kośa Lineage	五眼 The Five Eyes
禪宗 The Chan Lineage	六通 The Six Unimpedednesses (or Powers)
律宗 The Vinaya Lineage	四諦 The Four Truths
天台宗 The Tiantai Lineage	十二因緣 The Twelve Causes and Conditions
賢首宗 The Xianshou [Huayan] Lineage	六度 The Six Perfections
慈恩宗 The Ci'en [Faxiang] Lineage	四無量心 The Four Unlimited [States of] Mind

<sup>100</sup> Translation of section titles based on an as-yet unpublished translation of Yang's primer by Erik Hammerstrom, Pacific Lutheran University.

三論宗 The Three Treatises Lineage	涅槃四德 The Four Virtues of Nirvāṇa
密宗 The Esoteric Lineage	十界 The Ten Realms
淨土宗 The Pure Land Lineage	器世間 The Container Worlds
懺法 Rites of Confession	勸學 Exhortation to Study
諸法 All Dharmas	敘述古德 Narrating the Virtuous Ancients
五蘊 The Five Skandhas	餘韻 Lingering Charm [i.e. Postscript]

**Table 2: Lineage titles from Yang Wenhui's *Shizong lüeshuo***

律宗（一名南山宗）	Vinaya, also called the Nanshan
俱舍宗（一名有宗）	Abhidharma-kośa, also called Sarvāstivāda
成實宗	Satyasiddhi
三論宗（一名性空宗）	Three Treatise, also called Empty Nature
天台宗（一名法華宗）	Tiantai, also called Lotus Sūtra
賢首宗（一名華嚴宗）	Xianshou, also called Huayan
慈恩宗（一名法相宗）	Ci'en, also called Faxiang
禪宗（一名心宗）	Chan, also called Mind
密宗（一名真言宗）	Esoteric, also called True Word
淨土宗（一名蓮宗）	Pure Land, also called Lotus

**Table 3: Titles published in *Ding's Buddhist Studies Collectanea* from 1918 to 1923**

Year	Titles Published in Series
1918	<p>八大人覺經箋註 <i>Annotated Sūtra of the Eight Meditations of the Great Ones</i></p> <p>佛遺教經箋註 <i>Annotated Sūtra of the Deathbed Injunction</i></p> <p>四十二章經箋註 <i>Annotated Sūtra in Forty-two Sections</i></p> <p>佛經精華錄箋註 <i>Annotated Essential Records of Buddhist Scriptures</i></p> <p>觀世音經箋註 <i>Annotated Avalokitêśvara Sūtra</i></p> <p>高王觀世音經箋註 <i>Annotated Avalokitêśvara Sūtra of King Gao</i></p> <p>盂蘭盆經箋註 <i>Annotated Ullambana Sūtra</i></p> <p>阿彌陀經箋註 <i>Annotated Amida Sūtra</i></p> <p>無量壽經箋註 <i>Annotated Sūtra of Immeasurable Life</i></p> <p>觀無量壽佛經箋註 <i>Annotated Contemplation Sūtra</i></p> <p>無量義經箋註 <i>Annotated Sūtra of Unlimited Meanings</i></p> <p>觀普賢菩薩行法經箋註 <i>Annotated Sūtra of Meditating on Samantabhadra Bodhisattva</i></p> <p>金剛般若波羅蜜經箋註 <i>Annotated Diamond Sūtra</i></p> <p>般若波羅蜜多心經箋註 <i>Annotated Heart Sūtra</i></p>
1919	<p>佛學起信編 <i>Awakening of Faith in Buddhist Studies</i></p> <p>佛學指南 <i>Guide to Buddhist Studies</i></p> <p>六道輪迴錄 <i>Records of Transmigration Through the Six Kinds of Rebirth</i></p> <p>六祖壇經箋註 <i>Annotated Platform Sūtra of the Sixth Patriarch</i></p> <p>佛學小辭典 <i>Concise Dictionary of Buddhist Studies</i></p> <p>佛學大辭典序例 <i>Preface and Notes on the Great Dictionary of Buddhist Studies</i></p>
1920	<p>佛學撮要 <i>Essentials of Buddhist Studies</i></p> <p>佛學初階 <i>Initial Stages in Buddhist Studies</i></p> <p>佛學之基礎 <i>Foundations of Buddhist Studies</i></p> <p>學佛實驗譚 <i>Discourse on Studying Buddhism Experimentally</i></p> <p>觀世音菩薩靈感錄 <i>Record of the Miraculous Response of Guanshiyin Bodhisattva</i></p> <p>心經詳註 <i>Detailed Annotated Heart Sūtra</i></p> <p>入佛問答 <i>Questions and Answers on Beginning Buddhism</i></p> <p>靜坐法精義 <i>Essential Meaning of the Method of Quiet Sitting</i></p> <p>釋迦如來成道記註 <i>Annotated Record of Śakyamuni Attaining the Way</i></p> <p>無常經 <i>Sūtra of Impermanence</i></p> <p>佛像 <i>Buddha Images - 25 types</i></p>

1921	學佛捷徑 <i>Shortcut to Studying Buddhism</i> 佛學大辭典 <i>Great Dictionary of Buddhist Studies</i> 法華經句解 <i>Phrasal Understanding of the Lotus Sūtra</i> 圓覺經略疏 <i>Brief Outline of the Sūtra of Perfect Enlightenment</i> 維摩經註 <i>Annotated Vimalakīrti Sūtra</i> 讀大乘起信論捷訣 <i>Key to Reading the Awakening of Mahāyāna Faith</i> 佛教宗派詳註 <i>Detailed Annotated Schools and Sects of Buddhism</i> 袖珍本佛經叢刊 <i>Pocket Edition of Buddhist Sūtra Series, Volume 1</i> 袖珍本入佛問答類編 <i>Pocket Edition of Questions and Answers on Beginning Buddhism, Arranged by Subject</i>
1922	心經精義 <i>Essential Meaning of the Heart Sūtra</i> 死後之審判 <i>The Judgment After Death</i>
1923	大悲咒箋註 <i>Annotated Dhāraṇī of Great Compassion</i> 佛教感應篇 <i>Articles of Miraculous Response in Buddhism</i> 三藏法數 <i>The Buddhist Canon and Categories of Concepts</i>

**Table 4: Selected Chinese- and Japanese-language Publications  
by Shengyen, 1961-1981**

Title (Series)	Publisher	Year
中華佛教文化館簡介	臺北：中華佛教文化館	1961
佛教人生與宗教（聖嚴法師文集, Vol. 1）	臺北：覺世旬刊社	1963
佛教制度與生活（聖嚴法師文集, Vol. 2）	臺北：覺世旬刊社	1963
佛教文化與文學（聖嚴法師文集, Vol. 3）	臺北：覺世旬刊社	1963
佛教是甚麼（聖嚴法師文集, Vol. 4）	臺北：覺世旬刊社	1964
佛教實用法（聖嚴法師文集, Vol. 5）	臺北：覺世旬刊社	1964
怎樣修持解脫道	高雄：佛教文化服務處	1965
正信的佛教	高雄：佛教文化服務處	1965
怎樣做一個居士	高雄：佛教文化服務處	1965
基督教之研究（聖嚴法師文集, Vol. 7）	臺北：覺世旬刊社 高雄：佛教文化服務處	1967

聖者的故事（聖嚴法師文集, Vol. 9）	臺南：開元寺佛經流通處	1967
瓔珞（聖嚴法師文集, Vol. 10）	臺南：開元寺佛經流通處	1968
比較宗教學	臺北：臺灣中華書局	1968; 1969
世界佛教通史	臺北：臺灣中華書局	1969
正信的佛教	香港：佛經流通處	1974
明末中国仏教の研究: 特に智旭を中心として	東京：山喜房佛書林	1975
講詞二（慧炬文庫, Vol. 19）	臺北：慧炬	1976
正信的佛教	苗栗縣南莊鄉：無量壽	1977
正信的佛教	臺北：天華出版	1979
正信的佛教	臺北：靈山講堂	1981

**Table 5: Shengyen's English-language books first published by Dharma Drum Publications, 1982-1997**

Title	First Published	Reprints by Other Publishers
<i>Getting the Buddha Mind</i>	1982 [reprinted 1989]	North Atlantic Books, 2005
<i>Faith in Mind: A Guide to Ch'an Practice</i>	1987	Shambala, 2006
<i>The Poetry of Enlightenment: Poems by Ancient Ch'an Masters</i>	1987	Shambala, 2006
<i>Ox Herding at Morgan's Bay</i>	1988	
<i>The Infinite Mirror: Ts'ao-Tung Ch'an: Commentaries on Inquiry into Matching Halves and Song of the Precious Mirror Samadhi</i>	1990	Shambala, 2006



<i>The Sword of Wisdom: Lectures on the Song of Enlightenment</i>	1990	North Atlantic Books, 2002
<i>Zen Wisdom: Knowing and Doing</i>	1993, 1998 [rev. and exp.]	North Atlantic Books, 2002
<i>Dharma Drum: The Life and Heart of Chan Practice</i>	1996	Shambala, 2006
<i>Complete Enlightenment: Translation and Commentary on the Sutra of Complete Enlightenment</i>	1997	Shambala, 1999

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- DDB Digital Dictionary of Buddhism 電子佛教辭典.  
<http://www.buddhism-dict.net/ddb/>
- FGC *Foguang da cidian* 佛光大辭典.  
[http://www.fgs.org.tw/fgs\\_book/fgs\\_drser.aspx](http://www.fgs.org.tw/fgs_book/fgs_drser.aspx)
- MFQ Huang, Xia'nian 黃夏年, ed., *Minguo Fojiao qikan wenxian jicheng* 民國佛教期刊文獻集成 (Collection of Republican-Era Buddhist Periodical Literature), Vols. 209, Beijing: Quanguo tushuguan 全國圖書館, 2006.
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<http://bib.buddhiststudies.net/>
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# 中國近代歷史上佛學入門書籍之 出版事業 ——從楊文會居士至聖嚴法師而言

史瑞戈

英國愛丁堡大學人文高等研究院數字人文博士後研究員

## 摘要

幾百年以來，出版書籍在東亞佛教文化占據著主要地位，以做為佛法的容器與聖靈的物質而受到尊重，出版佛經也被視為是一種功德。但是，就佛經的語言與文風而言，並非未經專門教育者所能馬上了解的。因此佛經之外，有解釋、標章、演講等教育文獻傳播著。在許多中國佛教徒的學佛背景中，初學或入門書籍是發揮相當重要角色的一種教育書籍。從十九世紀以來有幾十種出版，如今在書店書架還看得到。此類的書籍讓有興趣的人利用易於獲取的方式而學佛，也不用馬上多花費時間或加入個人的承諾。

本文以三位佛學入門書籍的作者為中心，他們在相當不同的歷史狀況中生活，貢獻的書籍也很不同：楊文會（1937-1911）——「太平天國之亂」之後復興佛經出版事業，並撰寫《佛教初學課本》；丁福保（1874-1952）——編輯了部帙龐大的《佛學大辭典》，也是八種佛學入門書籍的編者；聖嚴法師（1930-2009）——所著入門書籍在英文世界是最受歡迎的作品之一。

本論文所要證明的是佛學入門書籍其實比其基本性質更加複雜而具有研究意義。它們代表從多元的傳統中凝聚出一種穩定而易了解的體系的結晶，也是作者教學方法的一種文獻體現。入門書是佛教出版文化的一個獨特類別，其作用一方面是重新編寫歷史，同時又將其顯示給新一代的信徒及修行者。

**關鍵詞：**佛教、出版文化、宗教入門書籍